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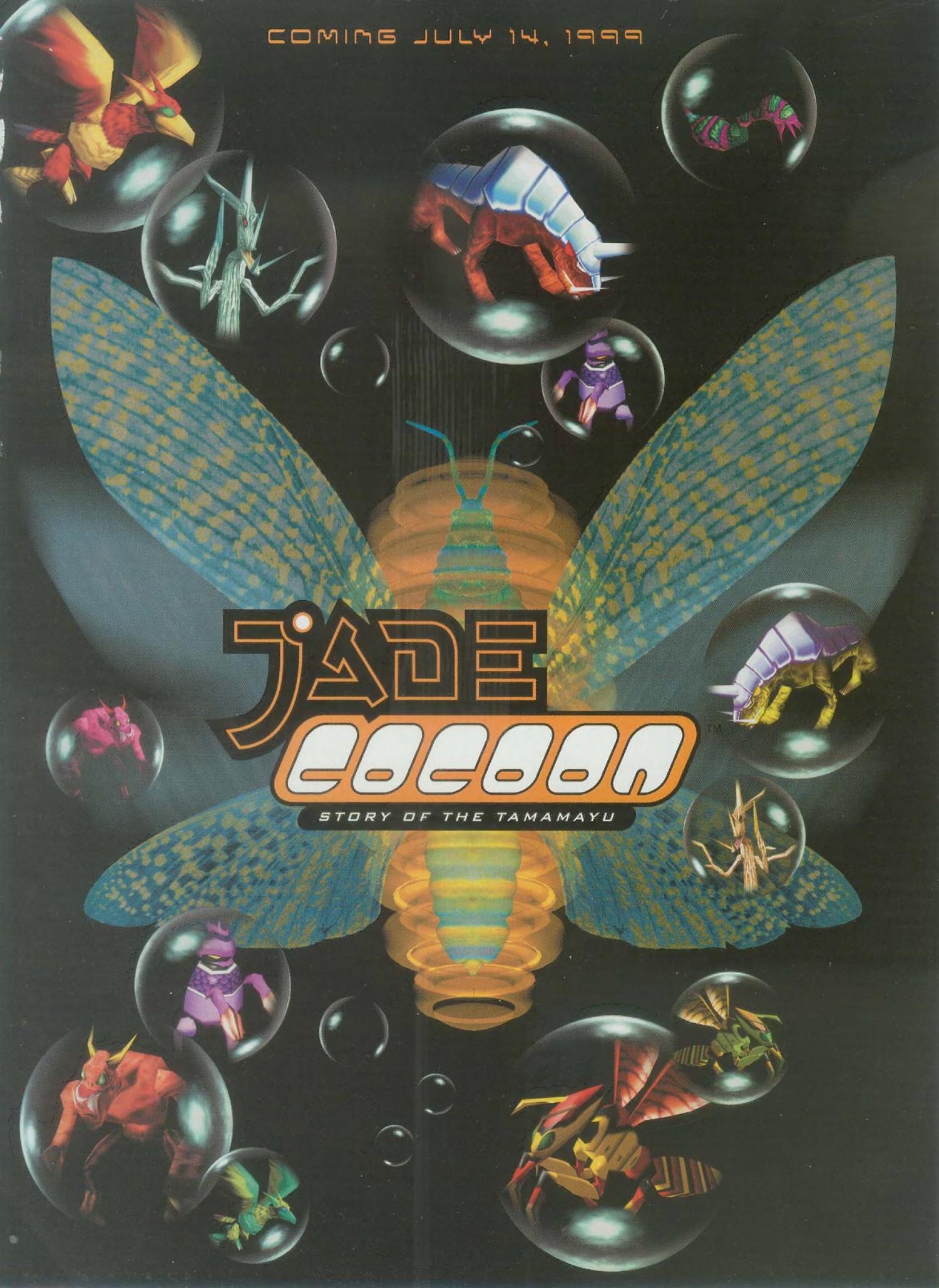
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Our cover this month marks Fred Fields' return to painting on canvas. For the past twenty years, Fred has painted primarily on Masonite or illustration board. His dark version of Boticelli's "Birth of Venus" holds other secrets, some of which are revealed in "ProFiles," on page 112.

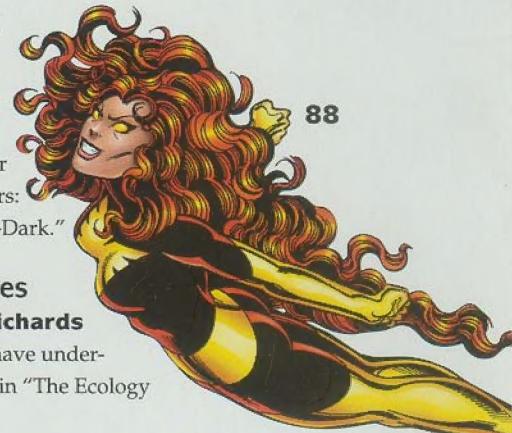
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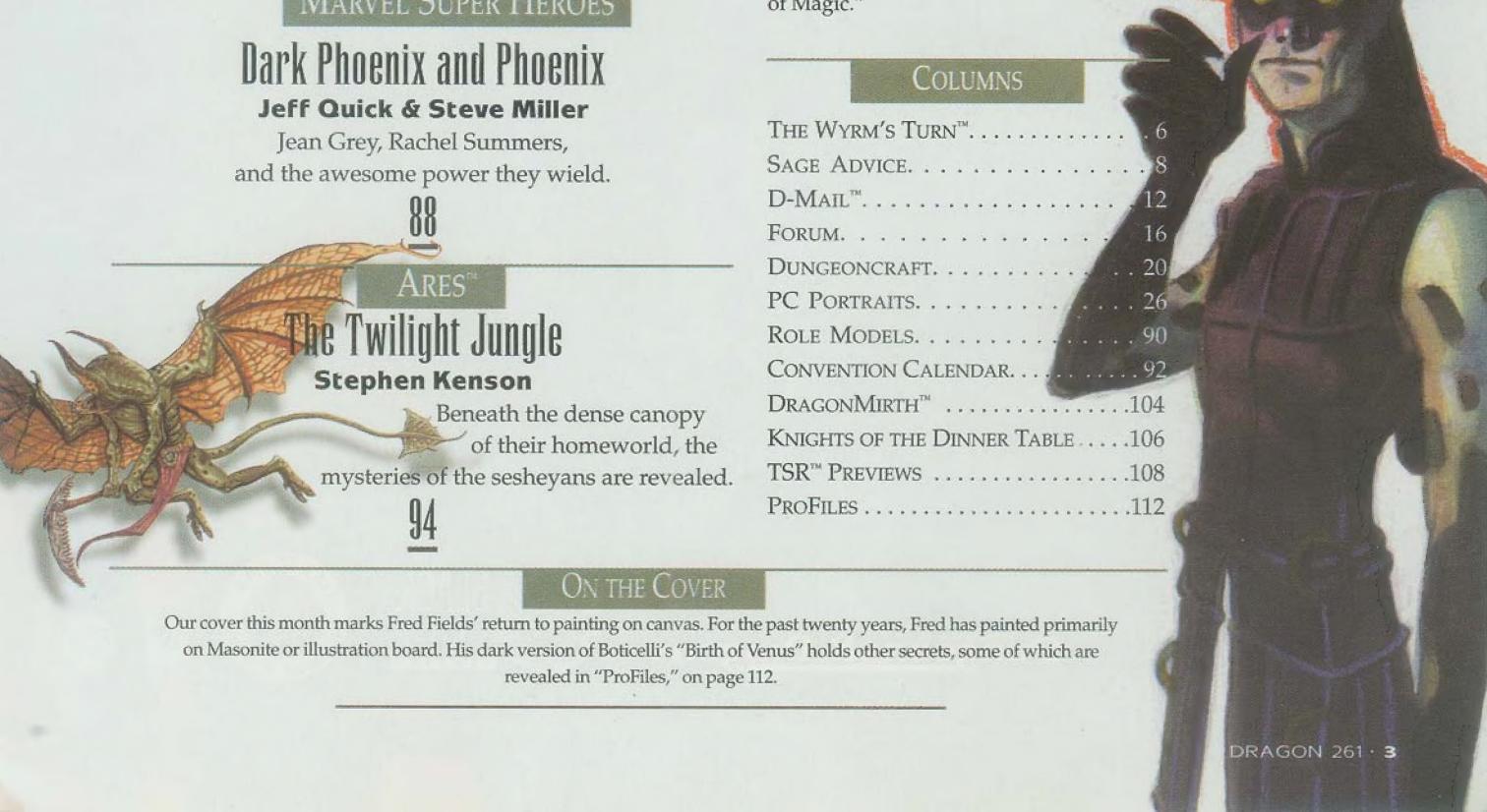
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Advanced **Dungeons & Dragons**



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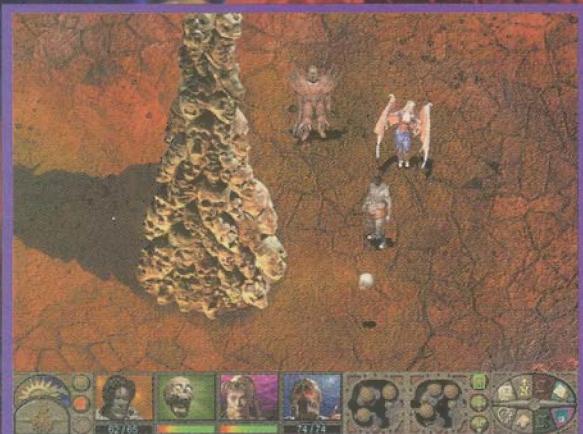
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What You Can't See

MOM SAID, "Don't be afraid of the dark." Still, you kept your eyes safely under the covers, not daring to peek. There was definitely *something* there ... under the bed, in the closet, outside the window ... in the dark. Then maybe you grew up and told your own children, "Don't be afraid of the dark." But the words were thick in your throat, because you knew it wasn't true. There are hideous things out there, just waiting for you to believe the lie, to forget the truth.

If we play fantasy roleplaying games to escape from the mundane world, then why do we take our horrors with us? Why aren't fantasy worlds always secure, peaceful havens? Why are we so attached to our fears and terrors?

Part of the answer is easy: Peace and harmony aren't much fun by themselves. Without an evil opposite, the light side soon becomes boring. A paradise is all very nice, but its inhabitants will soon be climbing the walls, looking for a little excitement.

Our most famous heroes have their flaws, their phobias and neuroses, and we regular folks have *lots* of them. We couldn't leave them behind if we tried. In fact, sometimes we intentionally escape *into* the darkness.

Like most young gamers, I played my share of evil characters, including the inevitable antipaladin. Twenty years later, however, I can't remember the names of those characters. In my memory, they're reduced to their only redeeming features: spiky armor and roomsweeping swords. For most people,

playing the villain is more a fashion statement than a roleplaying pursuit.

Antiheroes wrap the edgy surface of a villain around a heroic heart. Unfortunately, it's tough to agree on exactly what constitutes an antihero. At its most shallow, an antihero is a thug in sunglasses, a caricature of a hero *a la* Duke Nukem or your favorite WCW wrestler. Fortunately, there are better models available, with varying degrees of "anti" in their hero.

Han Solo transforms from a ruthless smuggler to a selfless rebel so early in his story that it's hard to remember that he shot Greedo first. (But he did, no matter what you see in the special edition!) Batman ranges from noble father figure to borderline psychopath, but there's never any doubt that he's a monster only to criminals.

What makes antiheroes so attractive, beyond the simple fact that they usually look cooler than other heroes, is that their virtue is hidden in darkness, eclipsed by a fearsome appearance or intimidating demeanor. This way, antiheroes embody the brilliance of virtue while remaining mysterious, cloaked in darkness, mingling with the unseen terrors that so frighten us.

Coming from the shadows themselves, antiheroes can give even the things under the bed something to worry about.



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TIME TO PLAY.



Sage Advice



By Skip Williams

This month, the Sage looks into spells and magical effects from the AD&D® game.

According to *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, a set of high-quality halfling leather armor counts as "no armor" when making adjustments for thieving skills. What does this mean, exactly? Can spellcasters wear this armor and still cast spells?

It means that when a thief, bard, or ranger wears the armor, the character can claim the bonuses to thieving skills listed in the No Armor column of Table 29: Thieving Skill Armor Adjustments in the *Player's Handbook*.

The armor is still armor, though. Wizards cannot wear the armor, nor can bards if they intend to use their spells. (See "Sage Advice" in issue #246 for a discussion of armor and its effects on casting wizard spells.) Clerics, who have no armor restrictions in the first place, can wear the armor.

Does a *shield* spell completely negate *magic missile* spells, or does it negate only *magic missiles* that hit the shielded character from the front?

A *shield* spell negates *magic missiles* launched only from the shielded character's front. (See the Facing section of Chapter 9 in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.)

My friends and I have a campaign with an Arabian setting. We use the character classes from the *AL-QADIM® books*. One of the players has a sha'ir character and is trying to use the rules in *The Complete Sha'ir's Handbook* to improve his gen (giving it better eyesight, hearing, and the like). The instructions are vague on how to get through the ritual and fasting period required to gain the genies' favor. On page 26 under Rituals, the book indicates that each ritual requires a variable period of time, depending upon the

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The time requirements vary from ritual to ritual, but their lengths are fixed, not determined randomly. Why the text says they last from 9 to 16 hours when the shortest one in *The Complete Sha'ir's Handbook* lasts 12 hours is a mystery to me. Perhaps the author anticipated DMs making up rituals of their own.

How does a sha'ir, particularly one below 12th level, survive the ritual required to improve a gen? When my group tackled this problem, our first thought was that casting the 1st-level spell *protection from hunger and thirst* (originally from *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*) would be a good start. *The Wizard's Spell Compendium, Volume Three* now lists this spell as lost knowledge, however, and the spell has been rewritten as a 7th-level spell. This leaves a low-level sha'ir with only two spells that can help him survive a ritual. One is the 1st-level spell *cool strength*, which protects against dehydration for 12 hours per level. The other is the 1st-level spell *ritual strength*, which lasts only 1 hour per level. This does not help when the minimum ritual length given in *The Complete Sha'ir's Handbook* is 12 hours.

It's tough for sha'irs to survive any ritual. Note that a *protection from hunger and thirst* spell does not completely negate the dangers of a ritual, as the sha'ir must still chant and withstand

Can you cast a web spell in a forest?

Can you cast a *web* spell in a forest? Do you need a 10'-wide tree for the spell?

Web spells work fine in forests. The webbing can be anchored to a few big trees or a group of little ones (provided that the trees are tall enough to accommodate the full height of the area of effect).

ability to be added or improved. The text also says the rituals require 9 to 16 hours to perform. This implies that each ritual requires a randomly determined amount of time. However, the ritual descriptions beginning on page 28 include a fixed time requirement for each ritual.

considerable elemental forces. At best, *protection from hunger and thirst* negates the penalties to Constitution checks the sha'ir makes during the ritual.

I suggest that you don't count any time spent under a *ritual strength* spell as "elapsed time" for purposes of calculating when the sha'ir must make a Constitution check during the ritual nor when assessing penalties to those checks. For example, a 5th-level sha'ir uses a *ritual strength* spell to perform the increased damage ritual (16 hours). The character starts making checks after hour 13 (instead of hour 8) and doesn't suffer a check penalty until hour 15.

While reading through the description of the 4th-level wizard spell *dimension door*, I noticed that casters who materialize inside a solid object become trapped on the Astral Plane. So, what would happen to a character casting this spell in Sigil, where one can leave only through a portal, or on the Inner Planes, which have no direct access to the Astral Plane?

This particular aspect of the *dimension door* spell never allows a character to circumvent any special restrictions a particular locale imposes on planar travel. Here are a few examples: A *dimension door* attempt gone awry in Sigil would mean the unfortunate traveler vanishes into nothingness, just like stepping off Sigil's ring. A *dimension door* mishap on the Inner Planes probably strands the caster on the Astral Plane. There's nothing "special" about the Inner Planes; they're just not "adjacent" to the Astral. A DM who's a stickler for planar details might decide the caster is thrown into the Deep Ethereal instead. A mishap on the Demiplane of Dread would dump the caster somewhere in the mists, unless the local domain lord has sealed the borders; in that case, the traveler winds up in some random location within the domain.

After a character attacks while using a *ring of invisibility*, when does he turn invisible again? Is it in the next round? Immediately after his attack? Some later time in the same round?

Once the invisible character attacks, he's used up his action for the round.

The character stays visible until he can use the *ring* to become invisible again. To do so, he must wait until the next round, when he can take an action to activate the *ring*. Note that using a magical item counts as a character's sole action for the round (unless *hasted*).

What would happen if a wizard cast a *there/not there* spell on an object and then cast an *invisibility* spell on the same object. Will the object be "not there" as long as the *invisibility* duration lasts?

The *invisibility* spell doesn't work on objects. There are ways to render objects invisible, however: *dust of disappearance*, for example. If an invisible object receives a *there/not there* spell, it



Will a rope of entanglement function on any huge or gargantuan creature?

still vacillates between "there" and "not there," but observers who rely on sight have a hard time telling when it is "there" and when it is not. The same effect applies if an object becomes invisible after receiving a *there/not there* spell.

What if a *there/not there* spell were cast on an object, and a viewer were to close his or her eyes? Would it the object be "not there" for the viewer? Or would it remain the way it was before the viewer's eyes were closed?

As noted in the previous question, when the object is "there" it is "there" whether one can see it or not. Likewise, if it is "not there" it is "not there" whether one can see it or not. Note that any event that might cause a creature to perceive the object counts as a "viewing" and requires a new check to determine the object's status. For example, if a closed door receives a *there/not there* spell and someone closes her eyes and tries to walk through the door, the DM should roll the dice to determine whether the door is "there" (bump) or not.

What if a *there/not there* spell were cast on a person? Could affected individuals be "not there" for themselves? If so,

what do they see? If they are not there for another person, does that mean that others can pass through the affected people as if they weren't there?

There/not there does not work on creatures. If you decide to ignore this limitation on the spell, you're on your own.

Suppose a boulder receives a *there/not there* spell. Now suppose the giant perceives the boulder as "there" and throws it at a dwarf who perceives the same boulder as "not there." The boulder lands directly where the dwarf is. The dwarf blinks, and now perceives the boulder as "there". Since now the dwarf and the boulder are occupying the exact same space, what happens?

Nothing special happens, because the situation you describe would not arise. The boulder's behavior will always be explicable from the giant's point of view. If the boulder is "not there" for the dwarf, it cannot harm the dwarf. Therefore, the giant "sees" the boulder bounce harmlessly off the dwarf, or miss the dwarf entirely, or some other series of events in which the boulder does not harm the dwarf. The boulder winds up someplace where the dwarf isn't.

Will a rope of entanglement function on any huge or gargantuan creature? In a past issue, you said a *vorpal blade* would function against a creature of any size, even a huge dragon, even though a 4' long *blade* isn't large enough to cut through the entire diameter of the dragon's neck, all thanks to the item's magic. Wouldn't this also apply to the *rope*? (Note that the actual length of the *rope* isn't given.) Also, is a saving throw allowed against either a *rope of entanglement* or a *vorpal blade*? It seems a little unfair to be able to kill a creature just because you rolled a 17.

According to the rules, a *vorpal blade* severs a dragon's neck on a good attack

roll even if the wielder attacks the dragon's tail. Magic defies rational explanation; that's what makes it magic. DMs who prefer to run a more empirical world are free to adjust their house rules accordingly.

Assume a *rope of entanglement* is about 50 feet long. Treat the thing as a portable *entangle* spell. A saving throw and magic resistance both apply. A *free action* effect negates the *rope*'s power, and incorporeal creatures cannot be entangled.

Recovered? If the ghost fails to take over a body, does it have to assume its semimaterial form? Or can it assume semimaterial form at will? If the ghost does not materialize, can it be attacked?

Ghosts roam the Ethereal Plane, not the Astral. Should a ghost find its way onto the Astral Plane, it cannot affect creatures on any other plane.

Aging (and fear) from a ghost occurs whenever a living creature sees one;

or fully charged staff). Creatures more than 30 feet away suffer no damage. A saving throw vs. spell applies; success reduces damage by half.

What is an *unseen servant*'s movement rate? Could an *unseen servant* wear clothing, such as a cloak?

I suggest a movement rate of 6. An *unseen servant* is just a force; it has no body and cannot wear anything. It could carry a cloak or carry a frame that supports a cloak.

What is an *unseen servant*'s movement rate?

It's reasonable to exempt really big creatures from the *rope*'s effects, or to limit the effect to only one part of the creature's body. If you go this route, an entangled creature can attack the rope, just not with the entangled body part. For example, a clever PC uses the rope to tie a dragon's mouth shut. The dragon, thanks to its great size, can claw at the rope. Note that it's also reasonable not to exempt very large creatures—perhaps the *rope* grows to entangle really big targets. It all depends on how wild and wonky the DM wants magic to be.

No matter what a DM decides about magic overall, a *vorpal blade* allows no saving throw.

Is it possible to recharge *Nidus' wand of endless repetition* (from FR4: *The Magister*)? What level spell would be needed to recharge the wand?

Wands, in general, are rechargeable. Since the item description does not say this *wand* is not rechargeable, it is safe to assume that it is. Still, the *wand* should be difficult to recharge. I suggest *ray of Ondovir* (from *Wizard's Spell Compendium*, Volume Three) and *time stop*.

Can a ghost use its aging attack from the Astral Plane? What is the range of the attack? When a ghost attempts to take over the character's body from the Astral Plane, where does the life essence of the target go if she fails her saving throw and the ghost takes over her body? To the Astral Plane? And if so, how can the essence be

creatures on the Prime can see Ethereal ghosts (but not Astral ghosts). There's no real range limit, but the creature must be close enough for a good look. (See Table 62 in the *Player's Handbook*.)

A ghost need not semi-materialize to deliver its *magic jar* attack, but it must materialize to use its touch attack.

If a victim fails his or her saving throw vs. a ghost's *magic jar* attack, the victim's life force is not displaced from the body—it is merely shunted aside as the ghost takes control. If a ghost's *magic jar* attack fails, it is not compelled to materialize and use its touch attack, but most ghosts usually do so.

Ethereal ghosts are effectively unavailable when their opponents have no access to the Ethereal Plane. PCs who meet a ghost they cannot attack would do well to beat a hasty retreat.

When a *staff of the magi* overloads, it explodes and deals damage. How do I calculate the damage?

When a *staff of the magi* explodes (either in a retributive strike or from overloading), the resulting blast has a base value of 8 points of damage times the number of charges in the *staff* (200 points for an overloaded or fully charged *staff*). This falls to 6 points per charge against creatures that are more than 10 feet but fewer than 20 feet away from the staff (150 points for an overloaded or fully charged staff). The damage falls to 4 points per charge against creatures that are more than 20 feet but fewer than 30 feet away from the staff (100 points for an overloaded

or wizard or priest memorize the same spell more than once? I ask because I have a silly rules lawyer in my campaign who insists that because a spell is wiped from a character's mind when cast, all "copies" of the spell would be wiped away, too. Weird, huh?

Yup, that's weird. A character certainly can prepare (memorize) a spell more than once. Each spell memorized counts against the character's daily limit. When the character casts a spell, that spell and only that spell vanishes from the character's mind, leaving all other spells (even "copies" of the cast spell) intact.

Is there such a thing as a circlet or crown that allows *ioun stones* to be set into it? If such an item exists, how many stones can it hold and where is it listed?

I'm not familiar with any such item. In any case, *ioun stones* must trail and circle the user to be effective, so placing a stone into a setting would render it ineffective. Note that there is no limit on the number of *ioun stones* a character can use at once (though the DM could set one).

If a character is slain while using a *hat of disguise*, does the wearer retain his original form? Or does he remain in his altered form even after being slain? If the latter is true, what would happen to the corpse when it decomposes? Will the skeleton reflect the altered form?

As general rule in the AD&D game, a creature that dies when in an assumed form reverts to its natural form upon death. In any case, the effect from a *hat of disguise* ends the instant the wearer dies.

Tanar'ri suffer only half damage from gases. What would the effects of petrification gas be in that instance? Also, if the tanar'ri suffer no damage from poisons, then why would they need to worry about taking half damage from poisonous gases when they already suffer no damage from them?

Gases that don't inflict damage have their normal effect on tanar'ri. A petrification gas petrifies a tanar'ri.

Tanar'ri suffer no damage from poisonous gases (such as *cloudkill*) and half damage from corrosive or purely damage-inflicting gases (such as green dragon breath).

When the Hovering At Death's Door optional rule is in play, can you use a *goodberry* to help a character who has negative hit points but who is still alive? I have been told by players that reflex actions would cause someone to swallow a berry placed in a character's mouth. How is beyond me. I would think that the berry would get stuck and have to be forced back out just as someone choking on something would need the Heimlich maneuver. What would stop the berry from getting stuck in the wind pipe or throat?

Your doubts are reasonable. In spite of what many roleplayers believe, unconscious people cannot chew or swallow. Gagging is a reflex; swallowing is not.

On the other hand, most DMs allow things like healing potions to work if someone just puts some in a character's mouth or trickles some down the throat. *Goodberries* could be used in the same way.

How long does a *goodberry* last anyway?

Goodberries last 1 day + 1 day per level (the spell duration).

Skip Williams is looking forward to a large supply of *goodberries* of a sort after laboring long and hard on beds of strawberries and raspberries at his Seattle area home.

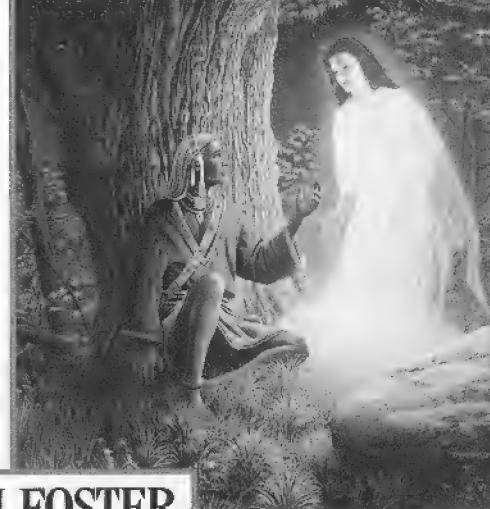
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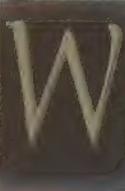
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More Science!

Issue #258 of *DRAGON® Magazine* was interesting for several reasons. The first of those, Bruce Cordell's "Mage vs. Machine," is perhaps the most interesting to me. I'm a great fan of the clockwork mages from the AL-QADIM® campaign setting, and these ideas would work well with *Tale of the Comet*, as well as the *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* adventure.



What terms would a wizard use to describe a bus, a tank, or an F-16?

James Wyatt's "No One Can Hear You Scream" presented good ways to add horror to an *ALTERNITY®* game.

The "Little Tomb of Horrors" was great for a laugh. The Nodwick strips have a lot of potential.

"Wizard Societies" was great too, but it came a little too soon after the secret societies article in issue #256. It blends well with some of the ideas from "Mage vs. Machine," as well as other books like *College of Wizardry*.

I would like to see *ARES™* become a larger section. One article a month isn't enough. I'm not fond of the *MARVEL SUPER HEROES™* Adventure Game, but I wouldn't object to seeing articles for it alongside *ALTERNITY* articles.

All in all, another great issue. Best of all, the cover. The interior reprint without text is impressive. I can see why Bruce was inspired to write his article.

Keep up the good work, and I'll have to renew my subscription!

Joe Kushner
Chicago, IL

Mage vs. Machine

Brilliant! Issue #258 of *DRAGON Magazine* was simply a master stroke. Bruce Cordell is a genius and deserves a raise. I have always avoided using technology in my AD&D® campaign for several reasons, not the least of which was the poor presentation. Most of the previous attempts have dumped science into a fantasy setting with no bridging terminology. I have always avoided using fire

arms, gun powder, or even smoke powder because of the terrible anti-fantasy feeling the mix always seems to entail. What terms would a wizard use to describe a bus, a tank, or an F-16? I was never interested in finding out. "Mage vs. Machine" was written with such obvious care and attention to the fantasy spirit of the AD&D game that even I would consider using this material. I even entered the "Design a Sheen" contest! The bridge of terminology he built in the article such as "living machine" instead of "droid" or "robot," makes accepting technology in a fantasy world much more reasonable.

And what about the artwork! Todd Lockwood is a master of composition; it took me several minutes to explore even the small pieces he did for this article, the mark of a great artist in this age of short attention spans. I hope he never sees another beer can or satellite dish (although a dragon flaming one might be to his liking). When I enter contests, I look at the prizes, and the

one for the "Design a Sheen" contest [*original artwork from Todd Lockwood*] is well worth it!

I also really enjoyed "Dragon Ecologies" this time, although I'm not particularly crazy about flail snails. It was the cantankerous master of the Monster Hunters Association I truly enjoyed. I'd hate (love?) to be a player in one of Mr. Richards' games.

Finally, as a new Gamemaster for the *ALTERNITY* game, I would like to say that every article that has come out for the game (including the crossovers to AD&D) has been outstanding, and this last one by James Wyatt was no exception. I'm not really all that familiar with the *RAVENLOFT®* setting, but his article on horror and madness has made me want to fill a dying spacehulk (complete with distress beacon) to the brim with something truly horrific.

Richard A. Hunt
6101 Whitby #1901
San Antonio, TX 78240

Praise for the content of issue #258 has been quite strong, but another aspect of that issue drew fire from even the most devoted of our readers.

Lightweight

I just received issue #258, and I am furious. What the heck happened with that issue? It is 96 pages, which is 24 pages short of the normal page count. Moreover, the issue contained only 64 pages of articles by my count, which is much less than normal as well; in issue #256 for example, I counted 86 pages of articles. (The absence of fiction in #258 accounts for only about half of the missing editorial content.) But the price of #258 is the same as that of #256. I would

rather *DRAGON Magazine* continue in quantity as it had been prior to issue #258, but I can't stop you from making the magazine shorter. If you do, please at least have the decency to lower the price and extend the subscriptions of those, like me, who subscribed under the belief that we were going to receive the normal quantity of material per issue.

Jean-Philippe Suter
Randolph, NJ

*For the past few years, the game industry at large has been strapped for advertising dollars, so you've seen fewer ads in *DRAGON* Magazine. To remain profitable, magazines adjust their page count in response to ad sales. You might have noticed a few 112- and 120-page issues in the past year.*

Also, printing a magazine in 32- or 16-page "signatures" (not counting the covers) is more economical than other permutations. Thus, 96 pages or 112 pages is more cost effective than, say, 104 pages.

That said, the April issue was still shorter on editorial content than we'd originally planned due to a few unfortunate surprises (and one happy one—more ad sales!) just before we went to production. We're sorry for the alarm that issue caused, and we don't expect another 96-page issue in the near future.

Rest assured that even when we're taken by surprise, our goal is to provide more than five bucks worth of game material each month.

Stick to Dragons

I wanted to make some comments on issue #258. I liked Lloyd Brown's "Wizard Societies." I have always been a big fan of mages and wizards, and this article helped me add new depth to my *GREYHAWK* campaign. I also like the "Dungeonecraft" column. It has some great ideas that I am sure have helped others as much as they have helped me. "The Little Tomb of Horrors" was awesome!

Now for a couple of problems. The "Mage vs. Machine" stuff totally turned me off. As I said before, I love my mages. I began reading the article with the hope that I could get something from it. Well, I didn't. I did like the "bleeding" of technology from one plane to another.

The new nonweapon proficiencies didn't seem to help my party's mages, however, and they quickly passed them up for more useful, traditional skills. I did use a 'sheen enemy in one adventure (a drifter), but my players seemed more pissed than excited. They fought the machine, but without much flair or caring for that matter. I understand that the *GREYHAWK* setting wasn't exactly made to house machines from distant galaxies, but it does have a fair amount of technology.

My second gripe is with the vast amount of *ALTERNITY* material in the magazine. I wish that you would follow *DUNGEON* Adventure's lead and stop printing so many *ALTERNITY* articles. In my opinion, *DRAGON Magazine* should stick to dragons.

Neal Romriell
Wytheville, VA

Namecraft

Ray Winninger's "Dungeonecraft" column in issue #258 was good, but it needs some expansion and correction.

First, what does Ray mean by suggesting not to use adjectives in names? Before surnames were adopted, folks had nothing but adjectives to differentiate between people of the same name. If you just mentioned "Thomas," folks usually thought you were talking about the Thomas they knew, but if you called the man you wanted "Thomas of Leeds" or "Thomas the Cartwright," then folks would get a clearer picture of who you meant. If you named him as "Thomas the Cartwright of Leeds," you would leave people with no doubt you were talking about a specific person, even if they had never heard of him.

What folks should avoid is inappropriate adjectives. Any beginning fighter who calls himself "The Amazing Bone Crunching Engine of Death, Despair, and Grinding Bones" is apt to find himself challenged and quickly picking up a more appropriate salutation, such as "The Whimpering Puppy." Besides, someone calling himself, "The Horrible Abuser of Property Rights" is prone to being hassled by the authorities. An adjective appended to a name is best used to describe what a person does (or did) in life, or where he came from.

Second, don't simply borrow from an existing language; instead, change it some. We Anglicize foreign words; the Romans Latinized them. Every culture does it, often because the original language uses sounds the borrowing language does not, or because the original language has sound combinations the





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new speakers find uncomfortable.

Additionally, don't be afraid to change those English names in the same manner. How many ways can you mispronounce Thomas? Just changing the short "o" to a long "o" can change your players' perceptions of the character.

Third, use any town's phone book. [As Ray suggests in the article.] Hie yourself to your burg's central library and look for their collection of phone books, or browse the names in an online service such as Yellow Book or 411. There are also lists of names on the web, the largest I know of being the Onomastikon (<http://www.fairacre.demon.co.uk>). Be sure to bookmark the site, since it has more names than you'll know what to do with on your first visit.

Finally, if a player really wants to play "Melvin the Mighty," let him. Who knows, he might decide to choose a better name after a few sessions of ridicule and scorn, or he might make the name "Melvin the Mighty" something to be reckoned with.

Just remember, a good name can help create a memorable character, but good roleplaying goes a lot further.

Alan Kellogg
San Diego, CA

What's in a Name

As a *DRAGON Magazine* reader from as far back as issue #55, I agree with the general comments being made about the quality of the magazine ever since TSR's acquisition by WotC. For a few years I thought about cancelling my subscription because there was little in the issue that I found appealing. I recall pages and pages being devoted to computer games and miniatures. Now, both of these worthwhile aspects of gaming are given short but sufficient treatment in the magazine. These topics are covered in other areas, and I'd hate to see too much of them in the magazine.

DRAGON Magazine used to be, and is now again, the premiere TSR house organ. A few articles about other company's systems are OK, but let's not have any more issues with only a handful of TSR material.

Dave McWhorter
Glens Falls, NY



RESIST DARKNESS

Brothers in Arms

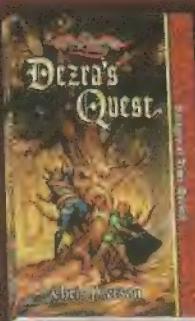
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Question of the Month

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What changes, if any, has your group made to the AD&D® game initiative rules?

A New Class

I see the psionicist and the monk as flip sides of the same coin. Both classes focus their internal energies on their own development. Psionicists focus on the mind; monks focus on the body. (The obeah, members of a priest kit introduced in DRAGON® Magazine a few years ago, focus on spirits.) The psionicist, who focuses internally, develops powers of the mind and fights primarily with these mental abilities. The monk, who focuses externally, develops powers related to his body and fights primarily with his hands. They employ similar methods to achieve different results.

If a 3rd edition of the AD&D® game is made, I suggest that the psionicist and monk classes be put into a new class group. The two branches of the class

would be as they are now, showing each class' tendency. Experience would also remain the same.

This addition adds a new element of mystery and increases each game's potential, and if neither are popular with the DM, then he can exclude the entire group.

Christopher Record
Denton, TX

What if the DM's Wrong?

One thing that bugs me, that has always bugged me, is this "the DM is always right" syndrome. I understand that arguing with the DM in the middle of the game is bad and should usually be avoided. However, DMs are human and can make mistakes, and I have known DMs who completely ruined an adven-

ture first. A lot of DMs would have simply told him, "Sorry, the ships are just faster than you," but I decided to hear him out.

The player pulled out a map of the kingdom that I had drawn and pointed out the river the ships had to use to reach the city. He showed me how the river twisted and turned a lot, while the road simply went straight to the city from his position, and to convince me even further, guided me through some quick calculations and showed, beyond a doubt, that he could reach the city first.

I was a bit reluctant at first to allow this, because it could really throw a wrench into the works of my plans. However, I decided not to squelch the player (after all, he was being pretty clever), and even gave him some bonus XPs for thinking up the idea. He arrived in the city and did something that seemed as if it would destroy my adventure: He alerted the city guard (who happened to have a couple of sloops docked in the river), and they prepared an ambush for the captors' ships. At first, I panicked. What on earth could I do to resolve this situation? I politely asked the players to give me five minutes, and behind the DM's screen I worked out a quick-and-dirty system for ship-to-ship combat.

The captors' ships arrived and the city guard was ready. They started boarding the ship that was carrying the PC captives. It turned out my system actually worked pretty well, and the fight on the river was intense and exciting.

To make a long story short, the PCs' captors had to destroy a bridge in their way and one of their ships got sunk, but the villains escaped, and they had captured the troublesome character who

Dungeon Masters are human and can make mistakes...

focus their energies differently but are quite similar in outlook. I would keep the restrictions against a monk dual- or multi-classing, but that's personal taste.

Another thing I suggest if such a change takes place is to increase the THAC0s of the two groups. Currently, both attack as a rogue of equal level. While not as puissant with a weapon as a cleric, I can see a member of this new class group, especially a monk, being much better at physical combat than a thief. As long as some middle ground could be found between the rogue and priest attack tables, the classes would be more balanced. Saving throws would follow a similar pattern. Proficiencies

ture because they wouldn't listen to a well reasoned argument by a player.

To illustrate my point, in an adventure that I DMed about two years ago, the players were on the trail of a band of villains, but they were ambushed and captured, except for one of the characters, who was hanging back. The villains had two ships on a river, where they took their captives before heading to a nearby river city. The remaining character decided, naturally, to trail the captors. The way I had things planned out, the ships would reach the city before the pursuing character could get there on his horse. The player contradicted me on this point and said he could reach the

started the whole mess. My adventure plot was intact, and thanks to that player being creative and speaking out, that night's session was a lot more interesting than it would have been otherwise.

Of course, during this time I gave the captive PCs time to do things too, but that is irrelevant for the point I am trying to make. My point is that the DM isn't always right, and that reasonable DMs give players a chance to have their say, as long as the player is also being reasonable. I have tried to use this policy while DMing, and it has made my adventures all the more interesting and kept my players happy.

James Walker
Bloomington, IL

More Than Mercenaries

I am deeply offended by Bruce F. Beyers' suggestion in issue #238 that the majority of adventurers, with the possible exception of paladins and cavaliers, are nothing more than common mercenaries. I have been playing the AD&D game, both behind and in front of the DM screen, for well over five years

now, and I have hardly ever encountered the kind of mercantile character Mr. Beyers describes.

The group of PCs I currently DM have only one lawful good character among their ranks, yet even Gwydion the mage/thief, the first to run to a pile of treasure, never demanded, as Mr. Beyers so eloquently phrased it, "compensation" from any of his patrons.

appropriate to the game than a minotaur or sesheyans? As you can probably guess, there are many "nonstandard" races in my world. I have even invented a few myself, of which I am most proud of the *sodenav*, a race of ratlike humanoids standing around 4 feet tall. I know, the idea of rat-men has been done to death, yet what makes the *sodenav* unique are their culture and personalities. Rather

W

What makes an elf or dwarf more appropriate to the game than a minotaur or sesheyen?

Maybe Mr. Beyers has had unfortunate experiences with his own group, but that is no reason to accuse the majority of adventurers of greedy mercantile tendencies. While *Knights of the Dinner Table* is certainly good for a laugh, they do not represent most roleplayers.

But enough whining. I'd now like to discuss the use of nonstandard races in the AD&D game. Is any race standard? What makes an elf or dwarf any more

than the standard despicability and sneakiness, the sodenav are friendly and outgoing, with a tendency to blend into any society while still keeping their own identity. They have become so popular that three of the four PCs in my group are sodenav.

I strongly believe roleplaying does not have to be convenient or conventional. If a PC doesn't want to participate in a certain quest, then so be it; let the party be

Ray:

Fearless warrior.
Powerful, chiseled, god-like physique.
Experienced forester.
Strikes fear into the heart of the
most hardened villain.
Sleeps with one eye open.
Brooding. Mysterious. Intense. Intimidating.
Known to many as Ray the Beheader.
Wit and intelligence charm townspeople
and defeat enemies.
Willing to give life in the fight against the dragon.
Raw animal magnetism makes him quite
popular with the wenches.



divided. Dealing with a split party is not as hard as it seems. Inter-party conflict can be great for roleplaying, and I try to encourage characters with those little flaws that make us human. Don't censor your character's ideas. Play the character you want to play, and play it well.

Daniel Chilcott
Eaglehawk, Victoria
Australia

A Question of Class

What is the most powerful character class in the AD&D game? The psionicist, I hear some people say—and indeed, a psionicist can be quite powerful at low levels. But I think another class, the often overlooked priest, is the most powerful.

A class that has good combat abilities, good (above average) hit points, neat extra powers, and access to multipur-

pose spells really shines at high levels. Maybe a longsword chops better than a mace, but give your priest a morning star plus a few spells, and then let's see who's going to last the longest. Turning undead is nothing to sniff at, and it is quite convenient if you are backed up by a score of like-minded paladins and priests, all eager to help you on your latest mission to further the faith.

Now is this character overpowered? Well, I think so, especially when specialty priests come in play. They have more powers (such as *charm* and improved undead turning) and fewer combat limitations. The best thing is that a priest comes with a smorgasbord of spells, varying from healing and *charm* spells to the most versatile out-of-combat spell list of any class. Where the mage must wander and research, painstakingly putting together spells, the priests simply look up and ask "so, where's that *flame strike*?"

The priest class should be changed to reflect the contemplation needed to cast priestly magic. The spells priests receive should have to be researched first. Let them pray, meditate, and light some of those incense cones before they gain

access to their spells. Let them sweat a little. Mages have to study to learn spells, why not priests? Isn't it reasonable that a priest should perform the right acts to be rewarded with access to a new spell?

Talking about overpowered spellcasters, bards are pretty tough too. At higher levels they might not amount to much compared to a wizard, but a 2nd-level bard is roughly equal to a 1st-level mage, but with better combat abilities. Since the XP-level for a 3rd level bard is equal to that of a second level mage, when you have one of each in the party, the bard is going to fare a lot better than the mage. My own campaigns (and those I've played in) always started out at 1st-level, and we hardly ever make it to the higher levels, so this type of comparison pops up often.

The priest class should be changed to reflect the contemplation needed to cast priestly magic.

To be honest, I do not have many other suggestions for improving thieves that wouldn't ruin the mood of the class. So I'm afraid, as Brian of "Knights of the Dinner Table" would most likely say, the thief's a wuss.

Pierre van Rooden
Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Weighing in on a 3rd Edition

I have a few thoughts on a 3rd edition. First, I believe that a 3rd edition is not only warranted but mandatory for the game to continue to grow and be playable. Many players fought when the 2nd edition came out, swearing that they would never fall for another scheme to take their money. Those players are now avid fans of 2nd edition, yet they are making the same noises about 3rd edition. Some people don't realize that, until the issue is stuck right in their faces, a new format and compilation of the rules can do nothing but improve the game. I have to agree with the other people who have written in when they say that the game must grow, or it will die. Wizards of the Coast is the leading game company, and AD&D is the leader in an industry that is shaping more gamers' minds every day.

My second comment on a 3rd edition is that with the various added rules, accessories, and *DRAGON Magazine* articles, there is a need for something to link these things together. Case in point: When playing with the *PLAYER'S OPTION* rules, the point costs for abilities in *Skills & Powers* differ from the costs in *Spells & Magic*. These are the kinds of things that can be smoothed over with a new edition.

Many players, like me, believe that with the advent of the *PLAYER'S OPTION* rules, the subclasses have no further use in the game and should be treated like kits. Let's face it, a paladin is merely a specialty kit for multiclassed fighter/priest characters. The same goes for the ranger, a clear example of a kit for a fighter/druid or fighter/thief. If the game was whittled down to just the primary classes, with a complete list of proficiencies, a more balanced point system, and uniform treatment for each ability, we'd have the finest roleplaying game ever. Now, some may

argue that if they wanted to play a point-based system, they would play another game, but I think a point-based system is warranted.

Lastly, I would like to address the format of a new edition, were it to come out. The *Player's Handbook* should contain all the information about the races, classes, kits, proficiencies, alignment, equipment, and spells. The *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* should contain all information needed to create and run a campaign, including basic stats for NPCs, the rules that don't appear in the *PH*, rules for creating kits, spells, magical items, and everything else that the DM must create. Notice I said rules for creating magical items, but not a list of those items. This is because each world creator must make his own items to truly control the environment of the game. The final thing that should be in the *DMG* is a brief description of one hundred or so monsters for the game and the rules on creating new monsters. This allows a new player to start a group with just these two books.

The *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* should contain a listing of at least a thousand monsters for use in any system, including notes for the various worlds already put out by TSR and side rules for modifying these creatures for specialty rules. Finally, there should be a new guidebook for creating world-specific kits, deities, spells, and planar travel. I would call this book *The DM's Companion*.

Clyde A. Starr Jr.
Lompoc, CA

Only a Flesh Wound

While reading a fantasy story where the hero, an obviously high-level fighter, was recovering from wounds that brought him near death, I began to consider the natural healing rate of characters in the AD&D game. I believe I stumbled upon a problem in the rules, but perhaps I am unaware of a rule that already addresses the problem.

A 1st-level human fighter, given the maximum possible hit points of 14, takes approximately two weeks to recover from a near death experience at the healing rate of 1 hit point per day.

A 10th-level fighter, who should be much more inured to such hardships and whose level of health and fitness should give him at least an equal healing rate to that of a 1st-level fighter, would heal from a near-death experience much more slowly. At a conservative 60 hit points, that's still two months of healing time. What could possibly explain this seeming discrepancy?

Perhaps the healing rate of any given character should be a ratio of maximum hit points to current level. So that same 10th-level fighter with 60 hit points would heal at a rate of 6 hit points per day, being fully healed after ten days. You might also wish to modify this by any hit point adjustment dictated by the character's Constitution score.

Jack Pitsker
San Juan Capistrano, CA



Philip:

Devoted monk.
Servant of the light.
Walks through the valley of death
with a broadsword.
Charismatic faith healer whose personal charm
wields enormous power.
Sought out for his wisdom and loving kindness.
Held in reverence by all who cross his path.
Dogmatic about saving souls from the
dragon and the devil.
Greatest triumph: releasing an entire
village from an evil spell.
Once slayed 30 lizardmen. And it was good.
Vow of celibacy tested daily due to the effect his
otherworldly sex appeal has on the womenfolk.

DARK STONE



Dungeoncraft

By Ray Winninger

Last month we started work on a map of the PCs' base of operations for the early phases of the campaign. This month, we continue to look at the essential features of such a base and provide some tips on drawing the map itself.

The Rumor Mill

Adventures are the cornerstone of any AD&D® game campaign, and it's difficult for the PCs to undertake adventures if they can't locate them. This might seem like a trivial problem, but inventing fresh and interesting ways to involve the players in your adventures is one of the most challenging tasks you'll face as Dungeon Master. To aid yourself in this endeavor, plan to include a fairly obvi-

just can't think of anything better. Also, a solid rumor mill prevents the players from getting the uncomfortable idea that there's just nothing left to do.

Typically, the local rumor mill is an inn or tavern with one of those quaint names like "The Laughing Unicorn" or "The Wistful Wyvern," though there are plenty of other opportunities. The mill could just as easily be a marketplace, an "adventurers' guild," or even a library. Any place where adventurers, veterans, "mysterious strangers," or storytellers gather will do. Whatever locale you select to serve as your rumor mill should be a location that obviously draws a lot of travelers and out-of-towners. The more people who pass through the mill, the greater the ease

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notoriety throughout the lands under the aegis of Richard. Bards, adventurers, and others with a tale to tell come to this square to speak their piece to the public, hoping for a few silvers in return.

A youngster, for instance, might come to the square to relate the story of how he and his father were recently waylaid by a huge furry beast (actually an owl-bear) on one of the trails outside Ironoak. Fortunately, the youngster managed to escape the beast's clutches, though his father wasn't so lucky. Hearing this tale, an outraged local merchant offers five hundred gold pieces for the beast's hide. This should be all that any adventurer worth his salt needs to hear before setting off to hunt the beast, and another adventure is underway.

In addition to the storyteller's square, one of Ironoak's inns, The Queen of Cups, is a notorious hangout for out-of-towners and adventurers passing through to the Black Wood. Ernst, the owner of the Queen of Cups, is a retired adventurer himself. Part of what attracts newcomers to The Queen is Ernst's huge collection of curiosities. He's known to pay top dollar for any souvenir of a daring exploit. He then exhibits these items to attract new patrons to the inn. For the price of a few drinks, he'll happily relate the story behind any piece in his collection. At present, the collection includes a black dragon's tooth, an inert *ion stone*, the pickled eyes of a medusa, and several lesser items, though Ernst is constantly acquiring new objects. This collection should be doubly effective in

A solid rumor mill prevents the players from getting the uncomfortable idea that there's nothing left to do.

ous "rumor mill" in your base of operations, a place where adventurers gather to swap boasts, rumors, and legends. Once the campaign begins, you can take steps to inform the players that a few hours spent in the rumor mill are likely to turn up an interesting story, patron, or legend capable of steering them toward a fresh adventure. This isn't the only means you should use to guide your players into new adventures (at least, it shouldn't be), but it doesn't hurt to have a safe backup for those times when you

with which you can introduce new information, rumors, and legends.

Of course, nothing says that you must confine your rumor mill to a single location. If you can come up with multiple sources for gossip and legends that seem to fit into your plan, so much the better. In our developing campaign world of Aris, for instance, the forest stronghold features two separate rumor mills. Somewhere inside the marketplace introduced last issue is a storyteller's square that has acquired a degree of

setting the players off on new adventures. They can overhear gossip and rumors not only from Ernst's patrons but also from Ernst himself, and his items might easily serve to interest the players in a potential feat of derring-do.

Interesting NPCs

Part of what makes the AD&D game fun for your players is the opportunity to interact with the interesting non-player characters you create. It's hard to imagine your base of operations taking root in the players' imaginations unless it's populated with interesting NPCs. At this stage, you should try to create at least two such personalities. If you can easily come up with more than two good ideas, so much the better, but don't feel obligated to stretch yourself. It's much better to develop two really good ideas than four or five mediocre ideas. You'll also have plenty of opportunities to introduce new NPCs into the base later.

There are a number of characteristics that might make a nonplayer character particularly interesting. NPCs with

obvious secrets, for instance, are always interesting; they encourage the players to get to the bottom of those secrets, possibly touching off an adventure or two. NPCs who can teach something of value to one or more of the players (like a master wizard, a high-ranking cleric, or a retired master strategist) tend to be interesting, as do NPCs the characters can obviously help or assist in some fashion (an orphaned boy, perhaps, or a kindly merchant deep in debt to an evil money-lender). Other viable strategies include NPCs who are not what they appear to be (a vaunted warrior who is secretly a coward), NPCs with distinctive physical features, NPCs who make mysterious prophecies ("One day, you will earn the right to command this stronghold."), and NPCs who are particularly good at involving the PCs in new adventures (perhaps an absent-minded wizard who continuously makes serious mistakes in his magical research, unleashing catastrophes the PCs must struggle to clean up). Note that at this stage you need only a couple of simple ideas for key characters so you can account for their needs

when you draw your map. For now, don't worry about developing game statistics, personalities, or backgrounds for the NPCs. We'll address those chores in a future installment.

Let's consider a couple of the most interesting local NPCs in Irooak. The captain of Richard's guard, Tarrin, is both "not what he seems" and a "man with an interesting physical characteristic." Tarrin has no left hand. He has told everyone that he lost the hand many years ago while fighting in a war, but the real story is much more interesting.

About twelve years ago, Tarrin led a special detachment of the king's troops to destroy a stronghold built deep in the forest by an evil cult. In retaliation, the cult leader cast a horrible curse on Tarrin that gave his left hand a mind of its own. Soon, Tarrin was waking up to discover bloody weapons in his hand; the next day he'd learn that one of his neighbors was killed in the night. Eventually, the situation became so unbearable that Tarrin went deep into the woods and cut off the hand himself to escape the curse. He doesn't know that the hand "survived"

Pete:

Ravishing sorceress.
36-22-34.
Intuitive, intelligent, and deadly.
Perfect physical specimen.
Legs inspire lust in knights, rogues, and warriors.
Uses powers for good, not evil.
Rebukes all suitors.
Harnesses magic energy through communion.
Will morph into a werewolf if provoked.
Interests include decoding secret messages and experimenting with arcane spells.
Meditation promotes luminous complexion.
Maintains girlish figure with daily swordplay.

DARK STONE

and is slowly crawling its way across the continent, wreaking subtle havoc and trying to find its erstwhile owner. Naturally, the hand is eventually going to show up in the campaign to provide a strange adversary (and surprise) for the PCs. As captain of the guard, Tarrin needs a special office or barracks somewhere on the Irooak map.

Another local NPC is an old, retired wizard named Jarrak who lives somewhere in the woods outside of Irooak, though he frequently visits the stronghold to replenish his supplies. Jarrak has the uncanny ability to come and go unseen. You might suddenly hear his voice from the corner of the inn and turn to find him comfortably seated and sipping his broth, even though no one saw him enter. A few moments later, you might turn to speak with him, only to find that he is gone, though no one saw him leave. Jarrak is famous for having discovered a potent, unique spell that he used to save Irooak from a band of marauders almost thirty years ago. It's said that Jarrak is the only wizard on all Aris who knows this spell; he's never

course, is that the players will eventually uncover them and come to realize the depth and richness of the campaign world you've created. But the players can't possibly uncover any of the secrets without the appropriate clues and hints. Carefully shuffle the index cards you have prepared and draw one at random. Your task is to think up a clue related to that secret so you can place it somewhere within your base of operations. I've drawn a secret I created in *DRAGON Magazine* #258. If you recall, the campaign planet itself is a living entity known as Aris and worshiped as a goddess by its inhabitants. Most inhabitants believe that the planet's single moon, Selene, is also a living entity and the daughter of Aris. Legend has it that Aris gave birth to Selene so that her daughter could one day take her place in the cosmos. Eventually, Aris (and all life upon her) will die out, opening the way for Selene and new life the moon goddess will create. Unknown to almost everyone on the campaign world, however, Selene turned evil, prompting Aris to revoke her birthright. Selene has already given birth

the mere existence of the secret. As a general rule, the more time that elapses between the point at which the possible existence of a secret is first suggested and the moment the players finally uncover that secret, the more satisfying their experience. Since I hope to give the players a whiff of this secret long before they finally get to its bottom, the saga of the mind flayers and the evil moon goddess has the potential to form one of the most satisfying episodes of the entire campaign.

So what's the clue? Ernst provides an obvious opportunity. Somewhere among the items in his collection is a mysterious stone idol in the shape of a mind flayer perched atop an orb. The orb is inscribed with a strange rune. Ernst acquired the idol from a passing adventurer but has no idea where the adventurer found it. In fact, the seller was too afraid to talk about how he came to possess the idol and was obviously happy to get rid of it. (He sold the piece for a mere five gold pieces.) This gives me all sorts of possibilities for the future.

We might introduce a strange cult of moon worshipers (the mind flayers' agents on Aris) who track their idol back to Ernst and attempt to reclaim it, possibly dragging the players into an adventure. Eventually, we could also allow the players to discover that the strange rune on the orb was a symbol for Selene in one of the planet's ancient tongues, providing them with a clue to the mind flayers' origin. In any case, the fact that the appearance of the flayers will be foreshadowed many months before they actually show up in the campaign should make their eventual arrival exceptionally dramatic. Since this hint is delivered in the form of Ernst, it won't require adding additional buildings or locations on the Irooak map.

It's hard to imagine your base of operations taking root in the players' imaginations unless it's populated with interesting characters.

found an apprentice worthy enough to learn it. Naturally, this is meant to serve as a challenge to any PC wizards. I'm hoping (and assuming) that they'll eventually attempt to convince Jarrak that they are worthy recipients of his secret knowledge. Since he's an out-of-towner, Jarrak won't need any special accommodations on the Irooak map.

Something Related to a Secret
If you've been following this column and obeying the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft, you've already created a number of interesting secrets pertaining to your campaign world. Two installments ago (*DRAGON® Magazine* #259), you might have written each of these secrets on a separate index card. It's now time to pull out your "deck of secrets" for the first time.

The idea behind these secrets, of

to the race that she hoped would replace the races birthed by Aris: hideous mind flayers! At present, there are probably some ten thousand mind flayers and other assorted beasts living on Selene. They and their goddess plan to destroy Aris and claim their birthright by force.

Now it's time to invent a clue to this secret that I can place inside Irooak. Before I proceed, I note that I've drawn a particularly big secret: It affects the entirety of the campaign world and has the potential to pit the players against some pretty tough monsters. Ideally, the players won't get to the bottom of this particular secret until far in the future, when they have gained enough experience levels to deal with the mind flayers. As a consequence, I'm not looking for a hint that gives away the farm; I need only raise the players' interest and allow them to uncover something suggesting

Drawing the Map

Now that we have surveyed all of its most important features, you can draw the map for your base of operations. Before you get started, you should review the five quick tips below. To recap, the following features must figure into the design of Irooak:

1. Barracks for Richard's troops
2. A centrally located "fire alarm" gong
3. Between twenty and thirty dwellings for townsfolk

4. Three inns, one of which is The Queen of Cups
5. A smithy
6. A large, open marketplace that features a storyteller's square
7. A temple of the Children
8. An elevator that allows visitors and their goods to be hauled up to the treetops
9. Tarrin's guardhouse

Tip 1: Use Graph Paper

A sense of scale and all that it implies are very important to the AD&D game. Although you won't need to keep track of such things during the bulk of the time the players spend in town, someday you'll need to know how many buildings are affected by a *fireball* dropped in the middle of your village, or exactly how many rounds it takes a wizard to run from the town gate to the local inn. If you get in the habit of drawing all your maps to scale on graph paper, you'll find it much easier to calculate the appropriate distances during play. Graph paper also helps you track the characters' movements in those

instances when it is important.

As a general rule, you should draw all your town and dungeon maps on regular square graph paper and all your wilderness maps on hex paper. (Regular graph paper is widely available at office supply stores; you can usually purchase hex paper at your local hobby shop.) In general, hex paper makes it easier to quickly assess the distance between any two points on your map, but it's not well suited for towns and dungeons since the right angles so common in dungeon corridors and city streets don't match the hexgrain well. I prefer graph paper with five squares to the inch, but you should feel free to use the size that works best for you. If you can't find graph paper, you can draw your maps on blank paper and use the cellophane overlays from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Set* to quickly drop a grid over the map when necessary. In any case, you should carefully craft your map to exact scale.

A scale of approximately 25 feet to the square works best for maps of small towns and villages. This means that the long side of a sheet of standard paper

covers approximately one quarter mile (if you're using paper with five squares to the inch), giving you an opportunity to comfortably fit all the town's buildings and a bit of the surrounding terrain on a single sheet. If, for some reason, your base of operations spans a larger area, increase the scale as necessary.

Tip 2: Get as Fancy as You Can

Unlike some of the dungeon and adventure maps you'll draw later, you're going to allow the players to look at this particular map during play. The more fancy and interesting you can make it, the more likely it is to spur the players' imaginations and improve your game. At a minimum, you should draw the map carefully and neatly. You should also consider adding color (colored pencils work best) and any other artistic flair you're capable of providing. If you have the means, there is a wide variety of computer software available that can help you spice up your maps, most notably the *Campaign Cartographer* product from Pro-Fantasy software or the *AD&D Core Rules CD-ROM 2.0*.



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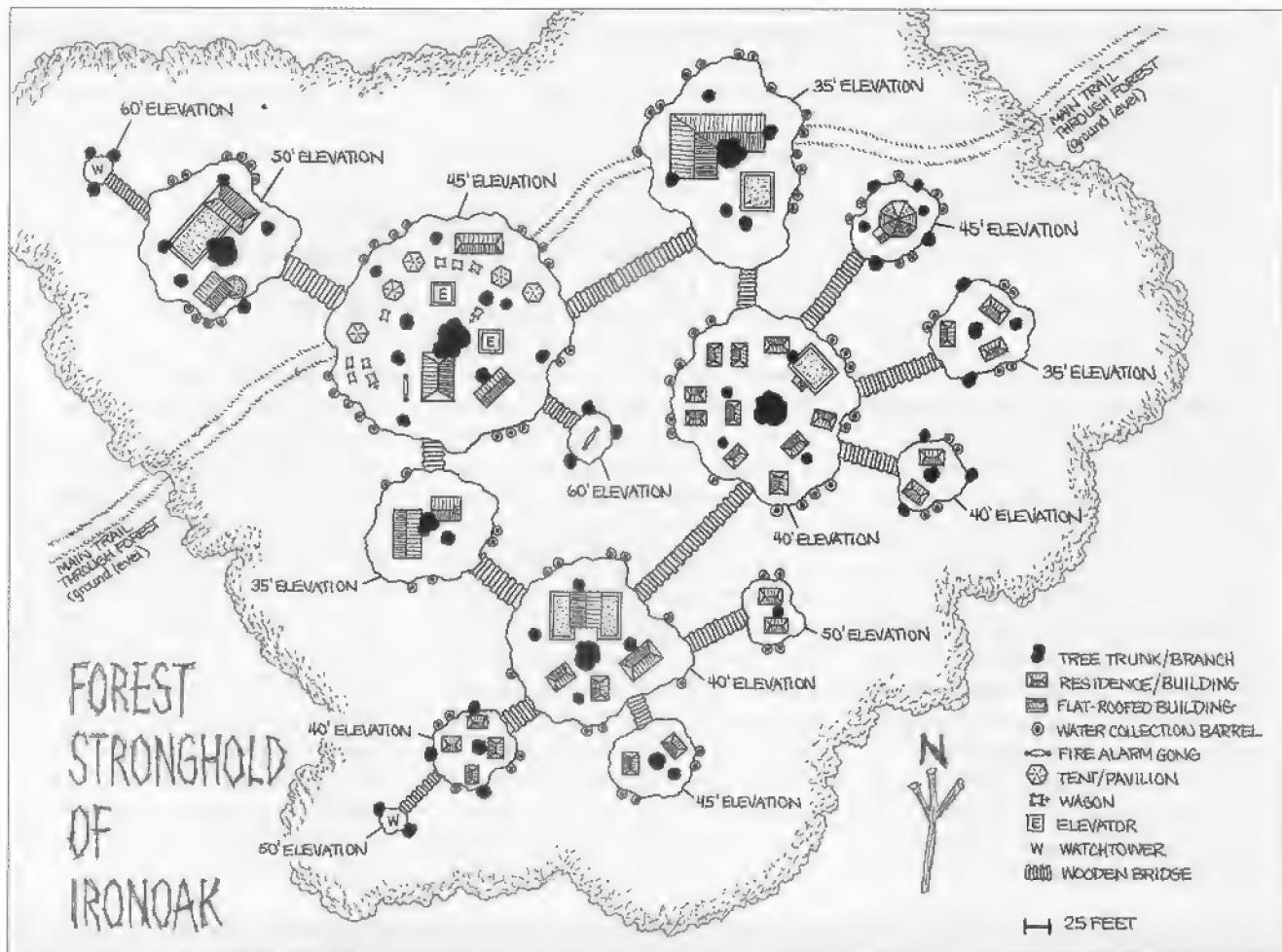
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DARKSTONE



Graph paper makes your maps more useful, and using colored pens makes it more attractive.

Tip 3: Make the Map Useful

When drawing maps for your campaign, you should always try to anticipate exactly how you'll use the map in play and tailor it to suit those needs. Anything that you can add to the map that might ultimately save you or your players some time is probably a good idea. On the map of your base of operations, for instance, you might include a legend indicating how far the average character can move in both one turn and one round. You might also place symbols on the map indicating where key characters are often found, diagrams showing the routes patrolled by guards, borders indicating areas frequented by local thieves, and other legends explaining the purposes of your buildings and areas. In this particular instance, though, don't place anything on your map that wouldn't be known to the average resident of the base. Remember, you're ultimately going to show this map to the players.

Tip 4: Don't Be So Predictable

Try to include at least one or two distinctive features on every map you draw. If every one of your towns uses the same basic layout, your players are likely to grow bored and confused. If there's something distinctive in each town, the players are more likely to remember each town individually and to bring each location alive in their imaginations. Sometimes, basic geography is enough to make each location distinctive. Try experimenting with angled streets, hills and other geographical features in the midst of town, and unusual building layouts. If you're struggling with basic layouts, look to maps of real world cities and towns for inspiration. You can also give each village map its own unique identity by resorting to fantastic elements (see last issue), special monuments, or unusual features (maybe a circus, a library, a mint, or an arena).

Tip 5: Be Logical

Finally, when drawing a village or town map, try to put yourself in the shoes of one of the town's fictional residents. Is water readily available to each of the residences? Are the town's inns easily noticed and accessible to out-of-towners? Are there places for merchants and visitors to stable their mounts? This sort of consistency will help lend your campaign an air of plausibility that will pay big dividends down the road.

Next month, we'll look at ways to breathe life into your campaign using well-constructed NPCs.



Ray Winninger still loves fantasy of just about every description. As he writes this, there are exactly fifty-one days, ten hours, and sixteen minutes to the premiere of the new Star Wars film.

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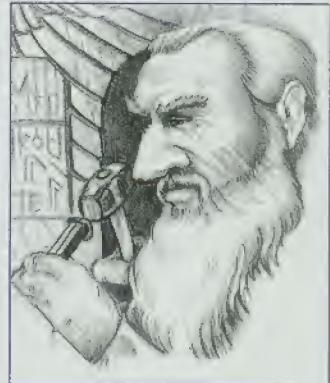


PC Portraits

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by George Vrbanic

"Humans may share many traits with the dwarven race (our appreciation for fine metals, gems, and ale)," notes George Vrbanic, "but our reasons for doing so are vastly different. Will we ever be able to grasp the beauty in a simple stone wall, or see the spirit within the sword just forged? Dwarves are not simply small humans, no more than humans are simply tall dwarves."



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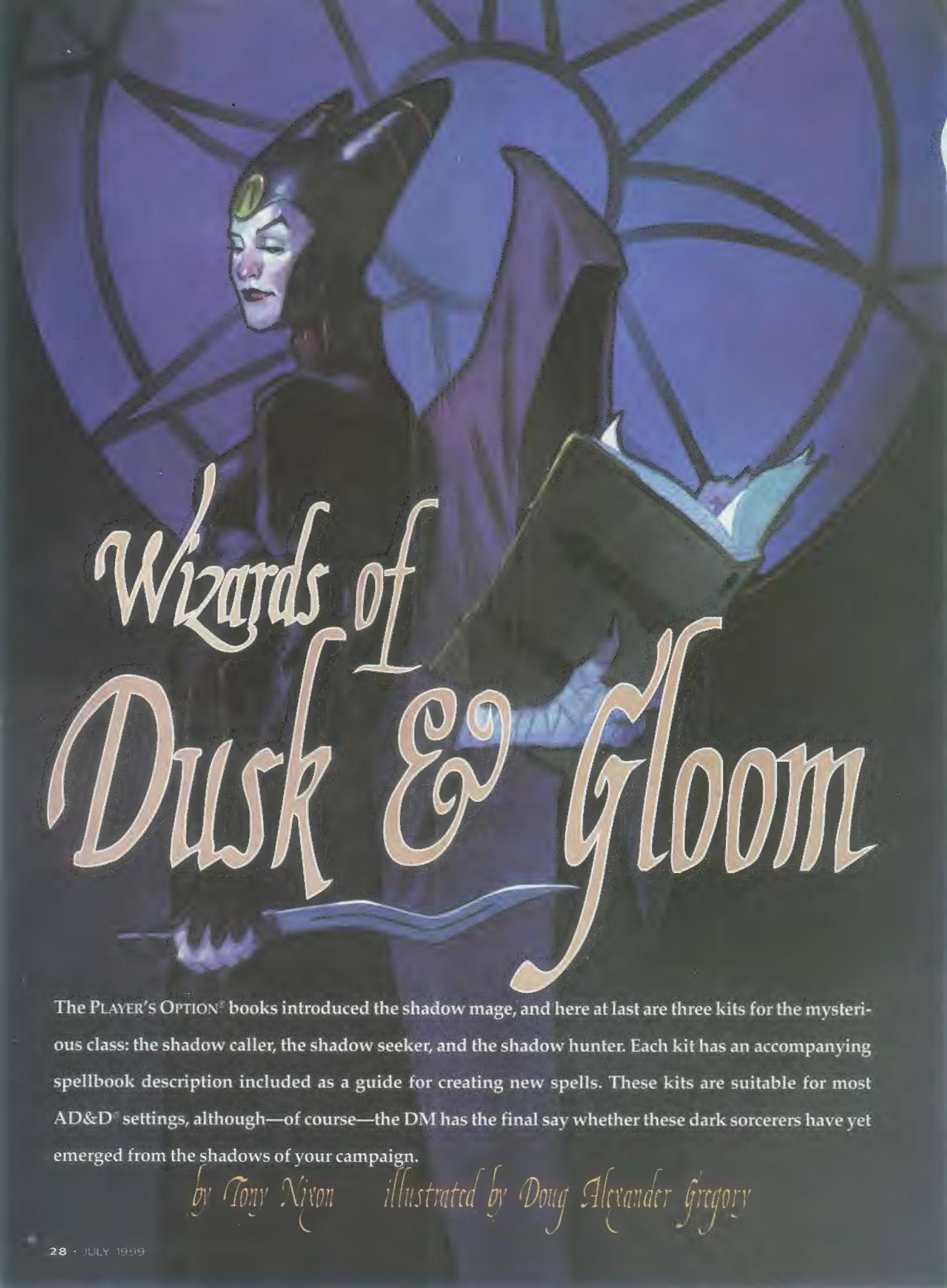


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Wizards of Dusk & Gloom

The *PLAYER'S OPTION* books introduced the shadow mage, and here at last are three kits for the mysterious class: the shadow caller, the shadow seeker, and the shadow hunter. Each kit has an accompanying spellbook description included as a guide for creating new spells. These kits are suitable for most AD&D® settings, although—of course—the DM has the final say whether these dark sorcerers have yet emerged from the shadows of your campaign.

by Tony Nixon illustrated by Doug Alexander Gregory

Shadow Mage Societies

Shadow mages are not highly regarded in most places because they dabble in unwholesome magic. Their spell selection certainly indicates a tendency toward the sinister. Since shadow mages are rarely social, it is difficult to disabuse mainstream folk of this notion.

The magical histories of a dozen worlds reveal only a handful of shadow mage societies, and these are small due to the class's demanding requirements. It is usual for a reclusive master of "the Gray Art" to take only a single student at a time. There are (or once were) a few select shadow mage societies on some worlds and planes, such as the Solemn Order of Dusk, the Wizards Tenebrous, and the Contemplative Brotherhood of Sublime Shadows.

Over the last century, a few renegade practitioners of Shadow magic have appeared, although their origins are unclear. Calling themselves the Gray Cabal, these wizards have developed a divergent philosophy of Shadow magic. The Gray Cabal claims that shadow magic based upon magical darkness is flawed. As evidence they cite such creatures as the shade, an entity that derives its powers from shadowy regions but weakens in total darkness.

Members of the Gray Cabal reason that Shadow magic is more powerful under twilight conditions than in total darkness. They use an altered version of the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* saving throw table; the modifiers applied to the saving throws of their opponents appear on Table 1.

Gray Cabal spellcasters do not have the ability to see increasingly clearly in darkness as they rise in levels. They still have preternaturally keen vision, but this manifests as an ability to notice individuals hiding in shadows. A Gray Cabal mage has a 5% chance per level of noticing such an individual.

Players with a shadow mage character can, if their DM allows it, choose to be Gray Cabal wizards. Membership in the Gray Cabal offers no physical advantages, because the Cabal is a loose brotherhood of like-minded wizards rather than a proper organization. Antipathy or rivalry from traditional shadow mages is common.

Shadow Mage Kits

Spellcasters practice Shadow magic in a variety of ways, and three of the many "sects" of shadow mages appear here in the form of kits. Note that shadow mages are rare; there are probably no more than a few dozen, even in regions well known for wizards. Useful information about more than a handful of these individuals is hard to find.

Proficiencies noted with an asterisk are from the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* book.

Shadow Caller

Shadow mages employ many spells that summon quasi-real creatures (such as *Mordenkainen's faithful hound* or *phantom steed*) or illusionary monsters (like *demishadow monsters*). The shadow caller also commands many spells that summon creatures from the Demiplane of Shadow. This expertise comes at a cost, as detailed later. Most shadow callers are adept at summoning undead shadows and slow shadows, and they have developed many unusual spells that summon other rare creatures, as well as spells that emulate the powers of such creatures. Most wizards who know of shadow callers see them as an example of the inevitable turn from the schools of effect to a recognized specialization, and some wizards consider shadow callers second-rate conjurers or necromancers.

Shadow mages believe their magic to be linked in some way to the Demiplane of Shadow, a place that is not inherently



evil. Shadow callers share this philosophy, but their magic has led them (perhaps through ignorance or arrogance) to summoning more malevolent creatures, some of which are actually interlopers on the demiplane rather than natives of the place. These interlopers include such insalubrious creatures as shadow fiends. (For more information on the denizens of the demiplane, see "The Demiplane of Shadow" from *DRAGON® Magazine* #213 or *A Guide to the Ethereal Plane*.)

Shadow callers are often savage individuals from remote lands, and many of them have an unusual understanding of spellcasting. The shadow callers' practice of magic is frequently violent, ritualistic, and dramatic. They are the least subtle of the shadow mages. Many cultivate a mysterious manner to frighten or impress. Certain ancient and powerful shadow callers were reputed to have the ability to invest the dark essence of shadow monsters into magical items.

With their dark background and startling array of spells, shadow callers can be excellent NPC villains. PCs with this kit need not be evil, however. Playing a character who has an alien view of magical specialization or who comes from a distant, mysterious land can create many roleplaying opportunities.

Table 1: Gray Cabal Target Saving Throw Modifiers

Lighting Conditions	Modifier
Bright daylight/continual light	0
Weak daylight/dusk/light	-2
Twilight/moonlight/lantern light	-3
Weak moonlight/torch light	-4
Candlelight/starlight	-3
Total darkness	0



Ability Score Requirements: Shadow callers must have a Constitution of 13 or higher, in addition to the basic requirements for a mage. They may not be lawful good.

Secondary Skills: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: As the wizard class.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* None. *Recommended:* Omen Reading*, Astrology, Herbalism, Ancient History, Religion. If a shadow caller PC comes from an "uncivilized" area, use proficiencies suitable for that society.

Special Benefits:

1. The shadow caller may consider the spell *summon shadow* to be in the school of Shadow, though it is normally the province of necromancy.

2. Shadow callers' affinity for shadow monsters means that no creature of this kind, with Intelligence 10 or less, may knowingly attack a shadow caller. This benefit works just as the Dustmen's "Dead Truce" ability (as described in the *PLANESCAPE* setting): Shadow monsters

will not attack shadow callers, provided that the shadow callers make no hostile action toward the monsters. Shadow monsters include summoned creatures, undead shadows, or slow shadows commanded by evil priests. This ability offers no protection from more intelligent monsters, such as shadow fiends.

3. Shadow monsters summoned by a shadow caller always have +1 hit point per Hit Die.

Special Hindrances:

1. Shadow callers can never learn *light* or similar spells.

2. Shadow callers have a sinister reputation, giving them a +2 reaction adjustment penalty to non-wizards and a +3 penalty to wizards who know of the character's area of specialization.

3. Any summoned creature not quasi-real, of a shadowy nature, or from the Demiplane of Shadow has a natural antipathy toward a shadow caller summoner. The shadow caller must make a successful Constitution check immediately after summoning to maintain control of the summoned creature. A failed check indicates anything from mute disobedience to an instant attack on the shadow caller, at the DM's discretion. Most shadow callers thus choose not to use the standard *monster summoning* spells.

Shadow Seeker

The shadow seeker is most concerned with the Demiplane of Shadow itself and is obsessed with becoming a shade. Any mage can conceivably become a shade, but for the shadow seeker, this goal is an absolute desire. The shadow seeker forever hopes to gain the knowledge and power to make the dangerous transition, thus becoming immortal.

Shadow seekers are prone to bouts of melancholy, perhaps an effect of manipulating shadowstuff so often. Then again, it might be that wizards of this disposition are naturally inclined to become shadow seekers. They are often outcasts from normal society and live in wild, desolate, and preferably shadowy areas. Their views on the rest of humanity can range from a superior scorn to an ingenuous incomprehension. They often find lengthy social interaction difficult.

The spells most favored by shadow

seekers are those that simulate the powers of a shade or that harness the arcane energies of the Demiplane of Shadow. Shadow seekers take every opportunity to visit the demiplane, especially if they can conduct spell research while there. Shadow seekers are invariably interested in such research, and they approach it in a scholarly manner.

A properly played shadow seeker raises some problems for the DM, since becoming a shade means instant NPC status for a character. (This is much the same as when a PC mage becomes a lich.) Becoming a shade should be a long-term goal of the character, and the DM should carefully control the PC's quest. The DM is encouraged to spin off adventures concerning the character's unsuccessful attempts to discover lore on this arcane subject. The final transition should be a major campaign event, occurring after a long career.

There are several possible ways to become a shade: the use of *energy drain* spells, casting the rare *create shade* spell, and other powerful rituals.

Ability Score Requirements: None, other than the basic requirements for a mage.

Secondary Skills: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: As a wizard.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus:* Sage Knowledge—the Demiplane of Shadow*. *Recommended:* Alchemy*, Research*, Reading/Writing, Spellcraft, Modern Languages, Ancient Languages, Ancient History. Shadow seekers may not take the Etiquette proficiency.

Special Benefits:

1. Shadow seekers may research Invocation/Evocation spells, although only those that draw on the strange energies of the Demiplane of Shadow. Examples include *darkening bolt*, *whisper blade*, *shadow head*, *Zala's deception*, *shadow gauntlet*, and *energy drain*.

2. Shadow seekers can cast *shadow walk* as if it were only a 6th-level spell. Shadow seekers must always add this spell to their spellbooks upon reaching 12th level. It is impossible for other wizards to copy this version of the spell.

3. Shadow seekers have developed a scholarly understanding of the Demiplane of Shadow. As a result, they gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against any effect that harnesses energy from the

Negative Material and Positive Material planes.

Special Hindrances:

1. The DM must ensure that shadow seekers take every opportunity to make the transition to shade. They abandon any task and ignore any previous obligations if they hear even a rumor of an individual, item, or location that can help them become shades.
2. Shadow seekers have a lugubrious nature; as a result, they always suffer a +2 reaction adjustment penalty.

3. Shadow seekers face a greater danger than other wizards when casting the spell *energy drain*; they have a 10% chance of losing 1 point of Constitution per casting. The loss may be regained with a *restoration* spell.

Shadow Hunter

Many wizard spells emulate or even improve upon the talents of a thief. The spells of a shadow mage, perhaps better than those of any other specialist, lend themselves to larcenous ends. Shadow mages with the shadow hunter kit have taken this concept to its ultimate conclusion, devoting their magic to theft or assassination.

Shadow hunters are urban characters, often operating as part of a thieves' guild. Special training allows them to work beside their thief comrades, while their spells allow them to accomplish feats an ordinary thief could not. These solitary characters often specialize in the theft of magical items or spellbooks. Their repertoire of spells can also make them fearsome assassins.

Shadow hunters delight in spells dealing with stealth, concealment, spying, and fast getaways. Wizard adaptations of the shadowy spells of Mask's priesthood (found in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting and described in *Faiths & Avatars*) would be perfect for a shadow hunter character. Shadow hunters are condemned and ostracized by the wizard community at large. It is a rare wizards' society that accepts members with this kit.

Ability Score Requirements: A Dexterity score of 14 is required.

Secondary Skills: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: As a wizard, but the character can choose one rogue weapon not usually allowed for a wizard character.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Bonus: Set Snares, Tightrope Walking. Recommended: Prestidigitation*, Gem Cutting, Herbalism, Reading/Writing, Disguise, Reading Lips, Ventriloquism* (see Special Benefits below).

Special Benefits:

1. Shadow hunters have the Move Silently and Hide in Shadows abilities as rangers of the same level. These abilities, in contrast to those of a ranger, function best in urban conditions.
2. Shadow hunters have access to rogue nonweapon proficiencies at no extra cost.
3. Shadow hunters have developed the skill of near-silent casting for spells from the school of Shadow. The shadow hunter has a base 50% chance of remaining inaudible while casting a spell from the school of Shadow with a verbal component, modified by +2% for every level of experience. Near-silent casting adds 1 to the casting time of the spell. A failed check indicates that the spellcasting is audible as normal.

Special Hindrances:

1. Due to the manner in which they harness magic, shadow hunters cannot use wands, rods, or staves. These items simply do not function in the shadow hunters' hands.
2. In non-urban conditions, shadow hunters are uneasy and prone to clumsiness. In such environments, their Move Silently and Hide in Shadows abilities are penalized, just as a ranger's abilities are in an urban setting. All proficiency checks reliant on Dexterity are made at -2 until the shadow hunters return to "civilization."
3. Shadow hunters are despised by other wizards; they suffer a +3 reaction adjustment penalty from wizards who know their area of specialization. Correspondingly, no wizards' society knowingly deals with them.

The Books of Shadows

Several mages have been presumptuous enough to name their spellbooks *The Book of Shadows*. Famous examples include Briel and Nebt Bhakau, both from the world of Toril. Descriptions of three more (one for each of the respective kits) follow. Only unique spells have been noted; a DM can decide what other spells are in these books.

The First Book of Shadows

The name of the shadow caller who wrote this spellbook is lost to time. A common ballad from his homeland calls him Bane-Eye, though why he was given this nickname is not known. What is known is that he commanded a group of raiders who worshiped the god of war.

Bane-Eye was infamous for launching his attacks at twilight, his forces bolstered by the shadowy monsters he summoned. He was eventually slain after he combined his warriors with a horde of orcish mercenaries. His failure to win the day could be attributed to squabbles between his servants; the orcs were much despised by the shadow caller's personal warriors.

With two arrows in his belly and seeing his forces scatter, Bane-Eye cast his most potent summoning spell. A shadow fiend appeared and was ordered to press the attack. The monster took one look at its weakened summoner, stole his mind, and departed. This is a telling example of the dangers of summoning such creatures.

Bane-Eye's book was taken by his fleeing minions. It has since been owned by several shadow callers, and the spells therein can now be found in other sources. The book is presently owned by a mage named Kellinster. He has no interest in its spells but is willing (rather irresponsibly) to allow them to be copied ... for a price. Slightly different versions of the spells have been independently developed by other shadow callers.

In addition to the spells listed below, the book contains the 6th-level spell *summon slow shadow*. This spell is fully detailed in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual, Volume Four*, in the description of the slow shadow. (Slow shadows and shadows summoned by the same wizard do not attack each other so long as the summoner is within sight.)

Claws of Darkness
(Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: 2

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: The caster's hands

Saving Throw: None



Casting this spell causes the caster's hands and forearms to change shape, elongating into featureless claws of inky blackness. This process takes 1 full round. The claws radiate a slight chill and appear to twist and warp. The use of this spell causes some discomfort to the caster. The bitter cold experienced in the first round may cause the caster to shriek with pain, although no damage is inflicted.

While using a *claws of darkness* spell, the caster cannot carry items in his or her hand nor cast spells that require somatic components; however, the caster may dispel the effect at will. Magical rings worn on the caster's fingers at the time the spell is cast are temporarily absorbed and cease to function for the spell's duration.

The caster can make 2 melee attacks per round; a successful hit from a claw inflicts $1d4$ points of cold damage. Upon a successful attack, the caster can choose to grip the victim, causing $1d4$ points of damage per round ($2d4$ if both claws strike) and *slowing* the target for as long

as the caster maintains the grip. The grip can be broken with a successful Strength check by the victim.

Upon silent command, the caster can will the clawed hands to elongate further, up to 6 feet. The hands can then reach through the narrowest of openings in pursuit of a foe. There is rumored to be a more powerful version of this spell, developed by the infamous Evard, called *Evard's shadow hand*.

Shadow Spiders

(Summoning)

Level: 3

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: Caster

Saving Throw: None

This spell causes the caster's appearance to change suddenly as the shadows around the caster's body deepen and begin to twitch, as if coming to life. Closer inspection reveals a carpet of tiny, shadowy spiders crawling over the wizard's body, issuing from the caster's clothes, mouth, nose, ears, and eyes.

The *spiders* are harmless to the caster and attack anyone who touches the wizard, including those who attack with a melee weapon. The tiny *spiders* swarm to reach bare flesh. Full plate armor delays the *spiders'* attack for 2 rounds, other armor types for 1 round. Any number of melee attacks upon the caster during the spell's duration triggers an attack, although the effects of the *spiders'* attacks are not cumulative.

The tiny creatures collectively cause 1 point of damage, but they also inject the victim with shadow venom; the victim must make a successful saving throw vs. spell to avoid the venom's effects. Those who fail the saving throw immediately start hallucinating, their minds wracked by distorted, shadowy images of the real world. A hallucinating individual cannot fight or cast spells. They are unable to attack, run, or even speak coherently while suffering the effects of the shadow venom.

Shadow spiders inflict no harm to non-living constructs, undead, and creatures from the Demiplane of Shadow. Such creatures are also impervious to the *spiders'* shadow venom.

The *spiders* are mindless and continue swarming over a fallen or dead opponent, ignoring other opponents unless they actually touch the victim—in which case the *spiders* attack. They are magical, shadowy things and can be driven away only by a *light* spell or similar effect cast directly at them. Fire magic that inflicts 1 point of damage per level of the *shadow spiders* caster also destroys them. Of course, victims of the *shadow spiders* are likely to suffer damage from such fiery attacks.

Gloom Ravens

(Summoning)

Level: 4

Range: 30 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell summons $1d4+1$ huge ravens from the Demiplane of Shadow to do the caster's bidding. They uniformly have the appearance of dark gray shadows and, unlike other ravens, are completely silent—at least when appearing on the Prime Material Plane. The *ravens* respond to simple verbal commands. Once summoned, they can be sent up to 1 mile from the caster's present location. If the *ravens* travel beyond the caster's visual range, the caster can only sense the approximate direction and distance of the *ravens* and cannot command them to attack unless he or she is a shadow mage (see below).

Gloom ravens can be summoned only outdoors, and it is most advantageous to summon them at dawn or dusk, because the *ravens* gain an extra hit die when the shadows around them are longest. The summoned *ravens* enable a shadow mage (and no other type of caster) to see through their eyes for the duration of the spell. Regardless of the number of *gloom ravens* summoned, the shadow mage can only peer through the eyes of one *raven* at a time. However, the shadow mage can coordinate the *ravens* up to 1 mile from his present location and order them to attack targets of his or her choosing within that area.

At the caster's command, *gloom ravens* can generate $1d3$ shadow images of themselves in combat (as per the *mirror*

image spell). Although summoned, *gloom ravens* do not fight to the death and are subject to Morale checks. Ravens that fail their Morale check return to the Demiplane of Shadow at the end of the round.

Gloom ravens (1d4+1): AC 6; MV 1, fly 27 (A); HD 1 (2 at dusk or dawn); hp 5 hp/die; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; SA eye peck (10% likely to attack an opponent's eye, 1-in-10 chance of plucking out an eye with a successful attack); SD never surprised, *shadow images*; SZ M (4'-6' wingspan); ML 12; INT low (5-7); AL N; XP 175.

Guardian Shadow (Summoning, Necromancy)

Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 day/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: The caster's shadow
Saving Throw: None

This spell binds an undead shadow to the caster's actual shadow. The monster briefly appears as if summoned, only to dissipate and merge with the caster's own shadow. The caster's shadow, although apparently normal, now remains intact and trails the caster regardless of lighting conditions. A sharp-eyed observer might notice this effect. A *light* or *continual light* spell directed at the shadow releases the creature immediately, whereupon it savagely attacks the nearest individual other than its shadow mage master.

While the caster has a *guardian shadow* attached, melee attacks aimed at the caster's back prompt the undead shadow to defend the caster. It blocks the melee blow meant for its master (suffering damage if the attack would hit its own AC), but then it counterattacks, gaining an attack of opportunity. The *guardian shadow* fights the attacker to the death, disappearing after it has defeated the attacker; it is slain, the attacker moves out of range, or after 10 rounds have elapsed. If the duration of the spell elapses before a back attack occurs, the monster simply returns whence it came.

The material component of this spell is a piece of smoky quartz with a knotted piece of string wrapped around it. The quartz is consumed in the casting.

Shadow mages without the shadow

caller kit may not consider this spell as part of the school of Shadow.

Wings of Gloom

(Alteration)
Level: 5
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 turns/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Caster
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes a pair of large, moth-like wings to appear on the caster's back, rather like those of a gloomwing. The wings look too flimsy to support a humanoid yet effortlessly lift the caster's weight. *Wings of gloom* is equivalent to a *fly* spell (MV 18) but with maneuverability class D. The spell does not impart the gloomwing's *confusion* ability but does enable the caster to hide in shadowy conditions, making the caster 50% undetectable with a -2 bonus to surprise. The caster can "will" the spell to end before the end of the duration. A wizard walking with *wings of gloom* is essentially weightless and can cross pressure-sensitive pit traps without triggering them.

The material components of this spell are a live moth and a lit candle. The moth is consumed and the candle is snuffed in the casting.

Summon Greater Shadow

(Summoning, Necromancy)
Level: 7
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 10' cube
Saving Throw: None

This spell summons a monstrous multi-limbed shadow monster. It is not, as might be supposed, a greater version of the undead shadow. (Mercifully, such a creature has not yet been recorded.) The summoned creature is a hideously fused group of undead shadows that writhe and thrash, mindlessly attacking all in their path, as if in great pain.

The *greater shadow* is composed of 1d4+4 shadows, effectively creating a size L monster with a THAC0 of 15. The 10'-diameter creature has 1 Hit Die and 1 extra hit point per shadow, and a -1 bonus to its THAC0; thus, a conglomera-

tion of six shadows would have 6+6 HD and THAC0 13. The largest *greater shadow*, composed of eight undead shadows, has 8+8 HD and THAC0 11. Regardless of its size, the creature has AC 7. It receives a number of attacks per round equal to the number of incorporated shadows.

Any damage to the *greater shadow* is suffered jointly: The creature must be reduced to 0 hit points for all to be destroyed. The *greater shadow* is turned as one creature, based on its Hit Dice.

This gestalt creature is slower than a normal shadow (MV 6) and cannot coordinate all of its limbs to attack in a single round. Roll 1d4+1 to determine the number of attacks during any given round; each attack inflicts 2-5 points of damage and drains 1 point of Strength from its victim. The *greater shadow* cannot follow complex instructions; it simply wants to enter combat as swiftly as possible.

The material components for this spell are two pieces of smoky quartz and some glue, all of which are consumed in the casting.

Shadow mages without the shadow caller kit may not consider this spell as part of the school of Shadow.

Summon Shadow Fiend

(Summoning)
Level: 9
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 9
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This is a specialized version of a *gate* spell. It is extremely dangerous to cast, and only a supremely powerful shadow caller can employ it with impunity. Shadow fiends are noted for gaining sustenance from the minds of intelligent beings, especially wizards, so most spellcasters should think twice before summoning such a monster.

A shadow fiend appears only in shadowy conditions, preferably at twilight, and serves only for a limited time. It does not appear if the spell is cast in a brightly lit or completely dark area. Shadow fiends are 50% likely to attack the summoning wizard, with a -5% adjustment for every point of Wisdom and Charisma above 13 that the caster possesses. Thus,

a wizard with an 17 Wisdom and 14 Charisma would reduce the likelihood of attack by 25%.

The material component of this spell is a piece of smoky or black stone that is carved into the shape of a tiny archway. The stone is consumed in the casting of the spell.

Shadow mages without the shadow caller kit may not consider this spell as part of the school of Shadow.

The Second Book of Shadows

The author of this book, Dariastren, was the court wizard to a baron called Krentzern. Dariastren suffered from a psoriatic skin condition exacerbated by exposure to sunlight. Consequently he stayed in the shadows whenever possible and hid himself beneath voluminous robes. This behavior did nothing to enhance his reputation at court.

Krentzern was a harsh-tongued man, embittered by his experiences at the ducal court, where he had been ridiculed for his provincial dialect and rural ways. He scorned book-learning, employing Dariastren only reluctantly and because his magical powers proved valuable in the provision of magical potions, in combat against monsters, etc. Krentzern often humiliated the wizard, berating him for his physical shortcomings and obsession with learning. Dariastren avoided confrontation with his master, biding his time and building up his resources.

The conflict came to a head one night when Baron Krentzern, drinking with his lackeys, decided to drag Dariastren from his "damnable books and potions" to join them in their revel. Dariastren, enraged at being disturbed in his researches, finally showed Krentzern the true extent of his powers. It is not known what spell or combination of spells Dariastren loosed upon his master, but Krentzern was changed instantly and forever, his character transformed to one of utterly broken gloom and misery until his death a few years later. Dariastren left Krentzern's castle unchallenged.

Dariastren then retreated from sight, taking refuge in an abandoned and ruined keep somewhere in the trackless reaches of the Dim Forest. Several groups initially pursued the wizard to bring him to justice, but all were slain or

forced to retreat. Dariastren took no students, and he had only limited contact with the local woodsmen and sylvan elves, to whom he looked for provisions in return for various magical favors. (Even today, the elf clans of the forest use many shadow spells.) He spent most of his time researching spells or using his magic to travel to distant places. One day he did not return.

There are many rumors about Dariastren's keep: There is a permanent *gate* to the Demiplane of Shadow in the dungeon below; shadowy guardians prowl the grounds; the area has slipped outside of the real world and become a Fading Land. Some time after the wizard's disappearance, a band of adventurers investigated the area. They found no spells to stop them, no summoned creatures to attack them, and no treasure or magical items. The spellbook has yet to be found.

The spellbook contains the four rare spells described below. It also contains a few cryptic notes on spell design, including mention of a spell called *Dariastren's fortress of shadow*. Nobody knows what happened to the wizard, although there are several theories and rumors. Perhaps he journeyed to the Demiplane of Shadow only to perish there; perhaps he was successful in becoming a shade and made the demiplane his home; perhaps he even serves a powerful shade wizard, hoping to learn the process by which he might make the transition.

Shadow Spray

(Evocation, Charm)

Level: 2

Range: 60 yards + 10 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 6' radius

Saving Throw: Special

This spell employs energies from the Demiplane of Shadow. Upon casting this spell, the wizard causes a multitude of ribbonlike shadows to explode outward from a selected point within range. Anyone caught within the *shadow spray* instantly loses a point of Strength and is made more susceptible to *fear* spells, suffering a -2 penalty to saving throws against spells of this kind. These effects fade after 3 rounds.

Furthermore, affected creatures must make a successful saving throw vs. spell to avoid the greater effect of this spell. Creatures with fewer than 4 levels or Hit Dice are not entitled to a saving throw. The disposition of any creatures not entitled to a roll, or that fail their roll, instantly changes. Some of the Demiplane's gloomy nature is passed on to them, making them despondent. Their morale is lowered by 1d4 points, and they are unable to undertake further actions, even if ordered, cajoled, or threatened. Affected individuals defend themselves only if attacked but are 50% unlikely to cast spells, change weapons, or change tactics in any given round for the full duration of the spell.

Undead and creatures from the Demiplane of Shadow are unaffected by this spell. The material component is a handful of black ribbons that the caster must throw into the air; the ribbons are consumed by the casting.

Dariastren's Shadow Well

(Evocation, Phantasm)

Level: 4

Range: 5 yards/level

Components: V, S

Duration: 3 rounds + 1 round/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Special

This spell turns the shadow of a victim into a temporary gateway that leads to a pocket of the Demiplane of Shadow. A victim must make a successful saving throw vs. spell every round for the duration of the spell or be sucked into his own shadow and transported there. The victim sees the area as a deserted, shadowy duplicate of the real world. While there, the victim suffers no real harm but is bedeviled by shadowy phantasms who stalk and taunt without actually attacking. At the end of the spell's duration, the victim is expelled back into the real world and suffers the effects of a *spook* spell for 1d3 additional rounds, although the victim flees from a nameless, unknown foe—not the spellcaster.

Mantle of Twilight

(Alteration, Illusion)

Level: 6

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 6

Area of Effect: The caster

Saving Throw: None

This spell summons into existence a wispy cloak of shadowstuff that hangs from the shoulders of the caster. The *mantle of twilight* appears to twist and roil, becoming agitated if the caster is in combat. The concealing effect of the *mantle of twilight* makes the caster more difficult to hit, affording a +2 bonus to the caster's Armor Class. This bonus is cumulative with other magical obscurments, such as the *blur* spell. While the spell lasts, the caster may strike creatures that are insubstantial or ethereal—for example, a ghost or a wizard under the effects of a *wraithform* spell—as if they were normal flesh and blood.

Alternatively, the caster can pull the *mantle* close, becoming an insubstantial shadow and making it impossible to hit the caster with anything less than a +2 weapon. However, if the caster employs this option, the ability to attack insubstantial creatures is lost.

If the caster battles another wizard protected by the same spell, the two *mantles* are dispelled upon the first successful attack. The shadows scatter, and each wizard suffers a minor *enervation* effect, temporarily losing a level (which returns after an hour's rest).

Dariastren's Shadow Blight

(Evocation, Necromancy)

Level: 9

Range: 5 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 9

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell is a variation of *energy drain*, created by Dariastren while researching the transition from human to shade. Upon casting this spell, the caster points a finger at an opponent, releasing a ray of darting shadows. The victim must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or permanently lose 1 level or Hit Die. If the victim has only 1 level or Hit Die, the victim transforms and disappears, as detailed below.

Those who fail the saving throw and survive the transformation effect of the spell lose another level or Hit Die for

each week that passes. As this process proceeds, victims gradually weaken and pale. They are unable to do anything except rest during the final week of the blight.

A victim whose levels or Hit Dice reach zero is transformed into a creature of the Demiplane of Shadow and immediately transported to that dreary place.

*Members of the Gray Cabal
reason that shadow magic
is more powerful under
twilight conditions than
in total darkness.*

Victims remember the time before their transformation with puzzlement and desire only to live out their lives in the shadow realm. They fight to the death if any attempt is made to take them from their new home.

The transformation can be halted by few methods. A *wish* spell can save a victim, as can a *remove curse* spell cast by a good-aligned priest of 12th level or greater who worships a god of light. Other options, at the DM's discretion, are possible. Levels, except for the one lost initially, can be regained at the rate of one per week once the spell's effects are countered, provided that the character has total bed rest. Undead and natives of the Demiplane of Shadow are not affected by this spell.

The material components of this spell are a leech, living or dead, and a handful of earth from the Demiplane of Shadow. All spell components are consumed in the casting.

The Third Book of Shadows

This spellbook is perhaps the most apt example of a shadow mage's spellbook, because absolutely nothing is known about the history and owner of the book.

Upon the final few pages is written an unsigned declaration in which, without giving any precise details, the author of the book boasts of a series of thefts, all accomplished by magical means.

Kreshenk's Shadow Mask

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 hour/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: The caster

Saving Throw: None

This spell hides the facial features of the caster in a mask of shadows. The *mask* is weightless, doesn't impair vision, and is totally effective in hiding the individual's features. It cannot be physically removed. It is especially effective when used in conjunction with a cloak, completely filling the hood with concealing shadows.

The *mask* also protects the caster from extremes of light and darkness; *darkness* or *light* spells cast directly on the caster of a *shadow mask* fail. Any such spells simply and quickly fade, the lighting conditions changing to a shadowy grayness for the duration of the *light* or *darkness* spell. A *dispel magic* spell does not immediately remove *Kreshenk's shadow mask*. Instead, the shadows slowly fade away over 1d3+1 rounds, possibly giving time for the caster to keep his or her identity secret.

While enjoying the benefits of a *shadow mask*, the caster gains a +4 saving throw bonus against any gaze attacks and a +2 bonus against divination spells capable of revealing the caster's identity.

Net of Shadows

(Illusion)

Level: 2

Range: 5 feet/level

Components: V, S

Duration: 3 rounds

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 25' radius

Saving Throw: Neg.

This dramatic spell causes all of the ordinary shadows in a 25'-radius around the spell's target or targets to rise up and fly at the chosen targets, forming a dark net. The targets must make a successful saving throw vs. spell. Those who succeed are mildly disoriented for 1 round, suffering a -1 penalty on attacks and saving throws. Those who fail are trapped inside a twisting web of shadows that leads them away from the caster. They cannot attack or perform



any other action until the spell expires. On the other hand, victims of a *net of shadows* enjoy a -4 bonus to Armor Class, as the strands of darkness obscure them from attackers.

The illusion can be disbelieved with a successful saving throw vs. spell at a -2 penalty. This saving throw is in addition to the initial saving throw to avoid the *net's* entrapment.

A *net of shadows* affects up to one person for every level of the caster. One unusual side effect of this spell is that it "steals" the shadows from the surrounding area, making any thief using the Hide in Shadows ability in the area of effect plainly visible. A *net of shadows* spell does not counter the effects of a *blend with shadows* spell (see below)—although a shadow remaining after this spell has been cast might be a giveaway that other Shadow magic is in effect nearby.

Scimitar of Shadows
(Enchantment)
Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

This spell transforms a nonmagical scimitar into a weapon of lusterless, weightless black steel. No other weapon can be used for this spell—presumably this was an idiosyncratic feature placed by the spell's originator—but the caster need not have proficiency with the scimitar to use the spell. When the *scimitar of shadows* slices through air, it remains completely silent. It inflicts damage as a normal scimitar, although its weapon speed is 1. The *scimitar of shadows* cannot strike creatures that are normally hit only by magical weapons.

The caster can command the *scimitar of shadows* to float in the air to a range of 15 feet and "will" it to attack using the caster's THAC0, although attacking requires the wizard's undivided concentration. The *scimitar* returns to normal, dropping to the ground 1 round after the wizard ceases concentration.

The material component of this spell is a nonmagical scimitar, which is not consumed in the casting.

Blend With Shadows

(Alteration)

Level: 3

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: The caster

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster and the caster's carried possessions to join with ordinary shadows. This joining is so absolute that the caster no longer has a physical form. The shadow remains unmoving, despite lighting conditions—which might be a giveaway to an astute observer. The caster is aware of the surroundings, although the caster can't move or attack until returning to physical form, ending the spell. This process takes 1d3 rounds, making surprise or (for example) a backstab attempt impossible. While in shadow form, the caster can be harmed only by magical weapons or spells.

Shadowtheft

(Alteration, Charm)

Level: 6

Range: 1 yard/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 day/level

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: 1 shadow

Saving Throw: None

Upon successfully casting this spell, the victim's shadow is magically removed and drawn into a specially prepared receptacle. Victims immediately feel weaker and lose half their Constitution value (rounded down), with corresponding losses in hit points (if applicable). Additionally, victims are without a shadow while enspelled but instantly regain both shadow and Constitution points at the end of the spell's duration.

While in possession of the container, the caster can summon a shadowy duplicate of the victim. The duplicate appears only at twilight, although it suffers no ill effects from different light conditions. It persists until dawn. It can speak intelligently when questioned but has none of the victim's memories. It performs any tasks the caster demands, even complicated ones, to the best of its abilities.

This "double" has half of the victim's hit dice or levels (rounded up) and any class abilities at that level. Magical items are not duplicated, nor are spellcasting abilities. The double can be slain, its body vanishing upon death. Any damage done to the double does not harm the victim.

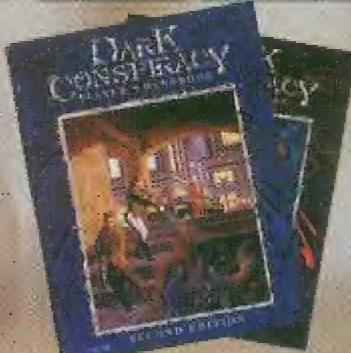
The material components of this spell are a pair of scissors and a special container. This container looks like a small lantern, except that its windows are made of dark, smoky glass. It must be of exceptional quality, costing no less than 1,000 gp, and inlaid with magical runes that surround the intended victim's name. Destruction of the container ends the debilitating effects on the victim and destroys the double. When the container has been used once for this spell, it is rendered useless.



Tony spends a not very shadowy existence as a copy editor in Cambridge, England. Only rarely does he feel an inclination to move to the Demiplane of Shadow.

DARK CONSPIRACY

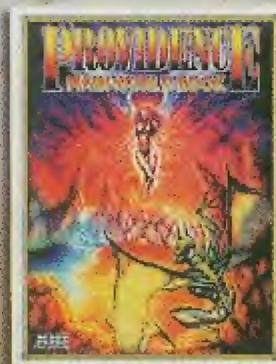
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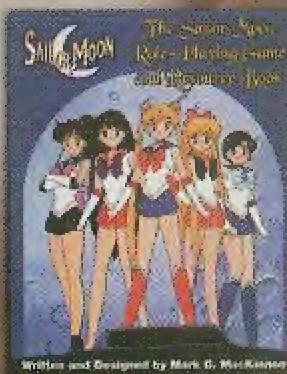
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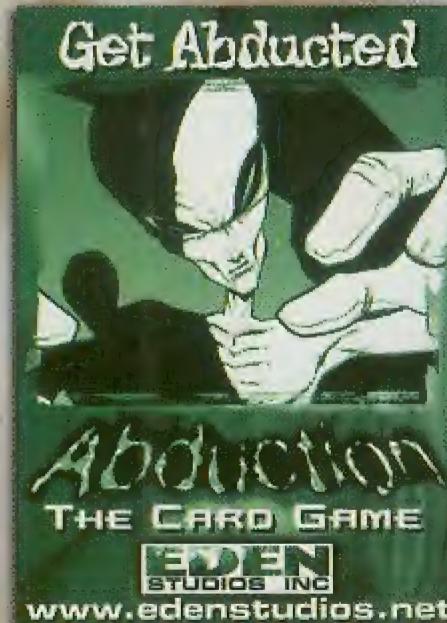
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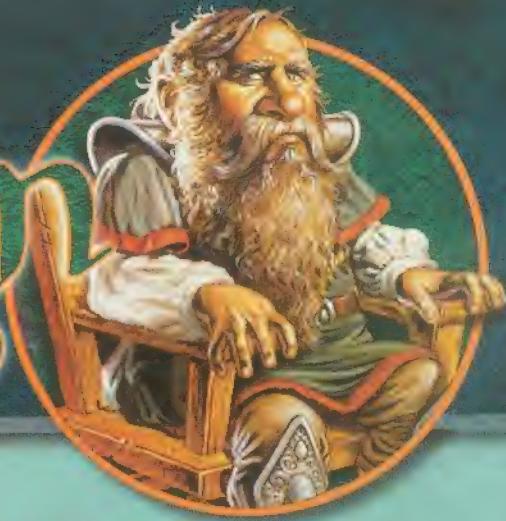
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By Any Other Name Dwarven Names



by Owen K.C. Stephens

*Dwarves are perfectly shaped, solid, and strong,
like the stones which form our dwellings.*

— *The Complete Book of Dwarves*

Whether they are portrayed as noble and sturdy craftsmen or greedy and sullen misers, dwarves are a common element of fantasy fiction and the AD&D® game. To help present and maintain their unique style, dwarven characters should have names that match their reputations. Most dwarven names in fantasy have a vaguely nordic sound to them, but they don't match any specific set of historical real-world names. This can make it difficult to develop a good dwarven name, especially for a DM who is trying to come up with a large number of names on short notice.

This problem is partially alleviated by the excellent dwarven name generator presented in *The Complete Book of Dwarves*, which gives a list of dwarven prefixes and suffixes for male, female, and stronghold names. Although that list is a good start, no definitions for these names are given. In addition to listing definitions for dwarven names, the following tables expand on the possible prefixes and suffixes. Although they can't represent all the possible names for a race as old and diverse as the dwarves, these lists can serve as a starting point and quick reference to create a large and consistent list of names.

How It Works

Each dwarven name consists of a prefix (from **Table 1**) and a suffix (from **Table 2** for male names, **Table 3** for female names, and **Table 4** for stronghold names). The definitions listed after each prefix or suffix are designed to help determine what a name means once it has been generated. Alternate spellings have been provided in some cases.

You may randomly generate a dwarven name by rolling once on **Table 1** and whichever other table is appropriate. If you prefer, it is also possible to pick a set of definitions and assemble a name that matches them. If your character is an ax-for-hire who hates dragons, you might decide his name reflects this. Looking at the definitions, you decide his name means "Dragon-Slayer." This results in the name "Valand." If the character had been female, you might have gone with "Valora," deciding that it means "Protector from Dragons."

If you don't like a particular combination, add an a, b, d, f, g, i, k, m, t, v, or z between the prefix and suffix. Although not every combination of prefixes and suffixes will sound right, usually only a minor change is called for. If you can't make a particular name work, try one with a similar meaning. If you didn't like

"Valand," try a name that means "Dragon Smasher" instead.

If you have randomly generated a name and don't like its definition, try altering the order of the words. It is also possible to use the definition as just a starting place for a name's meaning. Often the definitions can be combined in a poetic way for better results. For instance, dwarven names are often a description of where a character (or his ancestors) came from.

Thus "Nordris" could mean "Love of Mithril," "Mithril Heart," "Lovely Mithril," or even "As Lovely as Mithril." And although "Azigen" might seem like a name with a bad definition (Rock Stone), even it can work as "From the Stone and Rock."

Place names can take a little creative thought. Often adding "of" to the definition somewhere will help. "Durrall" might not make much sense if you define it as "Wolf Birthplace," but "Birthplace of the Wolves" works just fine.

Owen Stephens originally started this article after a player with a 9th-level fighter wanted to know the name of every follower he attracted. Previous to this, all followers had been named "Bob."



Table 1**Prefixes**

1d100	Prefix	Meaning
1-2	A-/Al-	Forge
3-4	An	Enemy/Giant
5-6	Ar-/Ara-	Blood
7-8	Az-	Rock
9-10	B-/Bal-	Anger/Wrath
11-12	Bel-	First
13-14	Bar-/Bari-	Crushing/Mighty
15-16	Baz-	Fire/Of the Flame
17-18	Bof-	Great/Ancient
19-20	Bol-	Hidden/Secret
21-22	D-/Dal-	Stout/Heavy
23-24	Dar/Dare-	Burned/Burning
25-26	Del-	Steel
27-28	Dol-	Weapon/Sword
29-30	Dor-/Dora-	Red
31-32	Dw-/Dwo-	Fierce
33-34	Duer-	Dark/Darkness
35-36	Dur-/Duri-	Wolf
37-38	El-	Goblin/Foe
39-40	Er-/Eri-	Elder/Old
41-42	Fal-/Fall-	Strong/Strongest/ Strength
43-44	Far-	Of the Stronghold
45-46	Gar-	Bear/Of the Bear
47-48	Gil-	Fire/Fiery
49-50	Gim-	Glad/Cheerful
51-52	Glan-	Forgotten/Lost
53-54	Glor-/Glori-	Silver/Glitter/Glittering
55-56	Har-	Hearty/Stalwart
57-58	Hel-	God's/Of the Gods
59-60	Jar-	Orc/Ugly
61-62	Kil-	Proud/Powerful
63-64	Ma-/Mar-	Gold/Golden
65-66	Mor-/Mori-	Brave/Bold
67-68	Nal-	Honored/Honorable
69-70	Nor-/Nora-	Mithril
71-72	Nur-/Nura-	Steady/Sure
73-74	O-/Ol-	Large/Fat
75-76	Or-/Ori-	Gem
77-78	Ov-	Cunning/Wise
79-80	Rei-	Vermin
81-82	Th-/Ther-	Oath/Of Oaths
83-84	Tho-/Thor-	Noble/Loyal
85-86	Thr-/Thra	Black
87-88	Tor-/Tore-	Soul
89-90	Ur-/Urni-	Death/Skull
91-92	Val-	Dragon/Magic/Magical
93-94	Von-	Tunnel/Of the Tunnel
95-96	Whur-	Iron
97-98	Wer-/Wera-	Battle/War
99-100	Yur-	Rune

Table 2**Male Suffixes**

1d100	Prefix	Meaning
1-2	-aim/-and	Slayer/Killer
3-4	-ain/-arn	Fist/Striker
5-6	-ak	Ax/Cutter
7-8	-ar/-ard	Guard/Guardian
9-10	-auk	Clansman/Crafter
11-12	-bere	Gauntlet/Hand
13-14	-bir/-bin	Keeper/Warden
15-16	-dak	Mine/Miner
17-18	-dal	Ale/Drink/Drinker
19-20	-din	Smith/Blacksmith
21-22	-el	Warrior
23-24	-ent	Mountain
25-26	-erl	Father
27-28	-gal	Shield
29-30	-gar/-gath	Lurker/Thief
31-32	-gan	Mason
33-34	-gen	Stone/Monolith
35-36	-grim	Eternal/Lasting
37-38	-gur/-guk	Boar/Steed
39-40	-ias	Anvil
41-42	-i/-ik	Brother/Ally
43-44	-ili/-li	Beard/Pride
45-46	-im/-rim	King
47-48	-in/-rin	Dwarf/Dwarves/People
49-50	-ir/-init	Giver
51-52	-kas	Scout/Seeker
53-54	-kral	Hall/Stronghold
55-56	-lond	Friend
57-58	-o/-oak	Barrow/Tomb
59-60	-on/-lon	Raid/Raider
61-62	-or/-ror	Riddle/Riddlemaster
63-64	-oril/-oric	Judge/Lawgiver
65-66	-rak	Hammer/Smasher
67-68	-ral	Heart/Spirit
69-70	-ric	Chest/Belly
71-72	-rid	Artificer/Craftsman
73-74	-rim	Spear/Stabber
75-76	-ring	Armor/Hide/Skin
77-78	-ster/-stili	Kin/Cousin
79-80	-sun	Rider
81-82	-ten	Son/Child of
83-84	-thal	Mattock/Crusher
85-86	-then	Earth/Earthen/Of the Earth
87-88	-thic	Champion/Victor
89-90	-thur	Hunter/Wayfinder
91-92	-ut/unt	Highborn/Nobleman
93-94	-ur/-rur	Master/Craftsman
95-96	-urt	Berserker/Battlerager
97-98	-val	Messenger
99-100	-var/-villi	Outcast/Exile

Table 3

Female Suffixes

1d100	Prefix	Meaning
1-2	-a/-aed	Hearth
3-4	-ala/-la	Blessing
5-6	-alsia	Partner/Wife
7-8	-ana	Eye/Eyes
9-10	-ani	Bearer
11-12	-astr	Ring/Jewelry
13-14	-bela	Ally/Sister
15-16	-bera/-bena	Will/Faith
17-18	-bo	Hair/Braid
19-20	-bryn	Wisewoman
21-22	-drid	Spinner/Weaver
23-24	-deth	Guard/Guardian
25-26	-dis	Gift/Riches
27-28	-dred	Maiden
29-30	-dris	Heart/Love/Lovely
31-32	-esli	Hand/Skill
33-34	-gret	Daughter/Child of
35-36	-gunn	Warrioress
37-38	-hild	Speech/Voice
39-40	-ia	Priestess/Holy Woman
41-42	-ida	Air/Breath
43-44	-iess	Mother/Matriarch
45-46	-iff	Beauty/Jewel
47-48	-ifra	Craftswoman/ Cook/Seamstress
49-50	-ila	Joy
51-52	-ild	Fair/Kindness
53-54	-ina	Art/Artisan/Craft
55-56	-ip/ippa	Pledge/Promise
57-58	-isi	Treasure/Treasure of
59-60	-iz	Fox
61-62	-ja	Mistress
63-64	-kara	Healer
65-66	-li/-ili	Twin/Twin of/Sister of
67-68	-lydd	Vindicator
69-70	-lin	Song/Singer
71-72	-mora/-moa	Seer/Prophetess
73-74	-ola	Brewer/Brew/Ale
75-76	-on/-ona	White/Pure
77-78	-ora/-oa	Tender/Protector
79-80	-re/-rra	Tree/Root
81-82	-ren	Life/Living/Birth of
83-84	-serd	Virtue/Virtuous
85-86	-shar/-sha	Moon
87-88	-thra	Escort/Matron
89-90	-tia	River/Pool
91-92	-tryd	Heroine
93-94	-unn	Highborn/Noblewoman
95-96	-wynn	Grace/Gracious
97-98	-ya	Guest/Hostess
99-100	-ydd	Queen

Table 4

Stronghold/Placename Suffixes

1d100	Prefix	Meaning
1-4	-ack	Bridge
5-8	-arr/-aln	Tower
9-12	-bek	Pass/Ford
13-16	-cral	Hall
17-19	-dar/-dann	Hearthplace
20-22	-duum	Home/Manor
23-25	-dukr	Wall
26-28	-eft	Castle
29-31	-erg	Town
32-34	-est	Cavern
35-37	-fik	Temple
38-40	-gak	Homeland
41-43	-girn	Mountainhold
44-46	-gyth	Mine
47-49	-hak	Bulwark
50-52	-hig	Garrison
53-55	-jak	Hold
56-58	-jyr/-jynd	Camp
59-61	-kak	Hamlet
62-64	-krak	Fortress
65-67	-lagg	Lair
68-70	-lode	Citadel
71-73	-lyr/-lynd	Grange
74-76	-malk	Village
77-79	-mek	Outpost
80-82	-nore/-noe	Point
83-85	-rak	Bastion
86-88	-ral	Birthplace
89-91	-sten	Rampart
92-94	-tek	Cradle
95-97	-vir/-vin	Barrier
98-100	-zak	Anvil



MISCELLANEOUS MISHAPS

Objet d'Art

by Dawn Ilbach



The foe has been defeated, and the time has come to reap the rewards.

Normally, the PCs can expect a few coins and a piece of jewelry, but the perks of adventuring come in many shapes. Adding objects of art to your campaign's treasures can reduce the overabundance of coins and keep your players from becoming bored with simple gold pieces.

The following tables expand upon the art object values found on Table 87 of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. They provide basic descriptions for several such items, allowing the DM to modify them to suit the campaign. For example, in the home of an air elementalist, PCs might find a wooden table with legs carved to resemble tornadoes or silk pillows resembling clouds.

To determine what art objects your PCs find, roll on **Tables 1a** and **1b**. To determine the condition of the object, roll on **Table 2**. For its age or value, roll on **Table 3a** or **3b**. For a description of the item, roll on **Tables 4a–4j**. To find what the item might look like or contain, roll on **Tables 5a–5h**. To determine what the item is made of, roll on **Tables 6a–6d**.

A D&D player for more than half her life, Dawn has recently begun playing the ALTERNITY® game. We expect to see more articles from her for both games in the future.



Table 1: Art Objects**1a. Items on a Person**

01-22	Jewelry
23-30	Weapons/armor
31-35	Cloth/clothing
36-40	Container
41-50	Figurine
51-55	Musical instrument
56-60	Crafts item
61-70	Spell component
71-94	Literature
95-00	Drinking vessel

1b. Items in a Cave or Lair

01-06	Jewelry
07-12	Furniture
13-18	Weapons/armor
19-25	Cloth/clothing
26-30	Painting/frames
31-35	Container
36-40	Statue
41-46	Tapestry
47-52	Figurine
53-58	Travel items
59-64	Musical instrument
65-70	Crafts item
71-75	Spell component
76-80	Household item
81-85	Literature
86-90	Cutlery
91-00	Dishes/cups

Table 2: Condition

01-05	Worthless
06-10	Dirty
11-15	Cracked/broken
16-20	Missing gems/pieces
21-25	Worn
26-30	Mended
31-90	Well tended
91-00	Like new

Table 3: Value and Age**3a. Value**

01-10	10-100 gp
11-25	30-180 gp
26-40	100-600 gp
41-50	100-1,000 gp
51-60	200-1,200 gp
61-70	300-1,800 gp
71-80	400-2,400 gp
81-85	500-3,000 gp
86-90	1,000-4,000 gp
91-95	1,000-6,000 gp
96-99	2,000-8,000 gp
00	2,000-12,000 gp

3b. Age

01-50	1-10 years old
51-59	10-60 years old
60-72	60-100 years old
73-83	100-200 years old
84-94	200-500 years old
90-95	500-1000 years old
96-99	1000-1500 years old
00	1500-2000 years old

Table 4: General Description**4a. Jewelry**

01-03	Buckle
04-07	Necklace
08-12	Bracelet
13-17	Holy symbol
18-22	Unholy symbol
23-27	Chain
28-32	Medallion
33-37	Earring
38-42	Locket
43-47	Headband
48	Nose ring
49-50	Anklet
51-54	Choker
55-66	Ring
67-69	Monocle
70-74	Eye glasses
75-79	Pendant
80-86	Brooch
87-93	Pin
90-94	Armband
95-99	Torc
00	Crown

4d. Containers

01-06	Bowl
07-12	Case
13-18	Coffer
19-24	Box
25-30	Ewer
31-35	Chest
36-40	Basket
41-47	Jar
48-54	Decanter
55-61	Urn
62-65	Vase
66-69	Vial
70-74	Flask
75-79	Musical instrument
80-89	Case
90-94	Pot
95-00	Cauldron, large or small

4b. Furniture

01-05	Book stand
06-12	Standing candelabra
13-20	Desk
21-30	Headboard
30-37	Couch
38-50	Armchair
51-58	Vanity
59-66	Screen
67-80	Table
81-88	Bench
89-90	Bench with seat lid
91-95	Bookshelf
96-00	Bookcase

4c. Cloth/Clothing

01-03	Belt
04-06	Flag
07-09	Vest
10-12	Boots
13-15	Ribbon

4e. Figurine

01-08	Natural animal
09-16	Magical animal
17-24	Magical creature
25-32	Fantastic creature
33-40	Humanoid
41-48	Building
49-56	Elemental (or quasi-elemental)

57-64	Religious	15-20	Poem	61-70	Fountain
65-79	Nature	21-23	Alchemical formula	71-80	Gazebo
80-89	Travel items	24-26	Family tree	81-90	Bridge
90-93	Elemental creature	27-30	Ink formula	91-00	Castle
94-96	Magical item replica	31-35	Will and testament		
97-00	Artifact replica	36-40	Property deed		
		41-45	Travel diary	01-05	Firetail (MCA3)
		46-50	Art	06-10	Hell hound
4f. Instrument		51-54	Letter of credit	11-15	Invisible stalker
01-07	Dulcimer	55-59	Pardon	16-20	Salamander
08-15	Lute	60-64	Directions	21-25	Earth weird (MCA1)
16-25	Harp hand/floor	65-69	Shopping list	26-30	Wind walker***
26-30	Mandolin	70-74	Herbal remedy	31-35	Crysmal (MCA1)
31-38	Zither	75-79	Song	36-40	Azer (MCA1)
39-49	Lyre	80-89	Map	41-45	Elemental vermin (MCA1)
50-59	Drum	90-00	Letter	46-50	Nishruu (MCA1)
60-69	Chimes			51-55	Phantom stalker (MC:FF)
70-89	Violin			56-60	Terithran (MC:FF)
90-94	Yarting			61-65	Xill (MC:FF)
95-00	Horn			66-70	Sylph
4g. Crafts Item		51-60	Demihuman	71-75	Aerial servant
01-10	Loom	61-70	Goblinoid	76-80	Pech
11-20	Pottery wheel	71-80	Giant kin	81-85	Sandling
21-30	Key	81-90	Woodland humanoid	86-90	Fire snake
31-40	Thimble	91-00	Sea Race	91-95	Nereid
41-50	Mortar & pestle			96-00	Water weird
51-60	Stylus				
61-70	Scissors	01-05	Pine cone(s)	5f. Engraving/Writing	
71-80	Quill	06-11	Fruit	01-07	Military signs
81-90	Map/scroll case	12-17	Vegetable(s)	08-14	Heraldic symbols
91-00	Clasps	18-23	Leaf/leaves	15-35	Common
		24-33	Flower(s)	36-40	Faerie runes
4h. Household Item		34-36	Egg(s)	41-45	Pirate symbols
01-05	Brush & comb	37-42	Snowflake(s)	46-50	Thieves' code
06-10	Tub	43-49	Butterfly/butterflies	51-55	Racial runes
11-15	Lamp	50-55	Mushroom(s)	56-61	Auld common
16-20	Hinges	56-62	Bee(s)	62-66	Personal code
21-25	Rug	63-70	Spider(s)	67-71	Wizard mark
26-30	Letter opener	71-84	Bird(s)	72-77	Wizard runes
31-35	Chandelier	85-92	Squirrel(s)	78-84	Alchemist's script
36-40	Rattle	93-00	Mouse/mice	85-89	Holy symbol
41-45	Blocks			90-94	Craft sign
46-50	Candlestick			95-00	Ranger's markings
51-55	Magnifying glass	01-15	Ship		
56-60	Whistle	16-27	Cart	5g. Contents	
61-65	Brazier	28-39	Wagon	01-03	Perfume
66-70	Incense burner	40-51	Carriage	04-06	Wick and beeswax
71-75	Door	52-63	Saddle	07-09	Marbles
76-80	Wall sconce	64-75	Sled	10-12	Plants and water
81-85	Cage	76-87	Boat	13-15	Plants and soil
86-90	Walking stick	88-00	Chariot	16-18	Smoke
91-95	Mirror			19-21	Holy water
96-00	Pipe, smoking			22-24	Unholy water
				25-27	Honey
4i. Literature		01-12	Pyramid	28-30	Nuts
01-03	Spellbook cover	13-27	Lighthouse	31-33	Raisins
04-08	Religious edicts	28-40	Mage tower	34-36	Sand
09-14	Recipe	41-53	Temple	37-38	Spell component
		54-60	Shrine		

Table 5: Appearance and Contents

5a. Humanoid

01-50	Human	61-65	
51-60	Demihuman	66-70	Sylph
61-70	Goblinoid	71-75	Aerial servant
71-80	Giant kin	76-80	Pech
81-90	Woodland humanoid	81-85	Sandling
91-00	Sea Race	86-90	Fire snake
		91-95	Nereid
		96-00	Water weird

5b. Nature

01-05	Pine cone(s)	5f. Engraving/Writing	
06-11	Fruit	01-07	Military signs
12-17	Vegetable(s)	08-14	Heraldic symbols
18-23	Leaf/leaves	15-35	Common
24-33	Flower(s)	36-40	Faerie runes
34-36	Egg(s)	41-45	Pirate symbols
37-42	Snowflake(s)	46-50	Thieves' code
43-49	Butterfly/butterflies	51-55	Racial runes
50-55	Mushroom(s)	56-61	Auld common
56-62	Bee(s)	62-66	Personal code
63-70	Spider(s)	67-71	Wizard mark
71-84	Bird(s)	72-77	Wizard runes
85-92	Squirrel(s)	78-84	Alchemist's script
93-00	Mouse/mice	85-89	Holy symbol
		90-94	Craft sign
		95-00	Ranger's markings

5c. Travel

01-15	Ship	5g. Contents	
16-27	Cart	01-03	Perfume
28-39	Wagon	04-06	Wick and beeswax
40-51	Carriage	07-09	Marbles
52-63	Saddle	10-12	Plants and water
64-75	Sled	13-15	Plants and soil
76-87	Boat	16-18	Smoke
88-00	Chariot	19-21	Holy water
		22-24	Unholy water
		25-27	Honey
		28-30	Nuts
		31-33	Raisins
		34-36	Sand
		37-38	Spell component

5d. Building

01-12	Pyramid		
13-27	Lighthouse		
28-40	Mage tower		
41-53	Temple		
54-60	Shrine		

39-42	Spices
43-45	Wine
46-48	Glue
49	Potion
50	Potion component
51-53	Ink
54-56	Magical scroll ink component
57-59	Rare herb dried/fresh
60-62	Cosmetics
63-64	Exotic tea leaves
65-66	Healing liquid (heals 1-3 hit points of damage)
67-68	Embalming fluid
69-71	Oil
72-73	Acid
74-75	Poison antidote
76-77	Drugs
78-79	Fragrant oil
80-81	Liquid soap
82-83	Paint
84-85	Burn salve (heals 1-3 hit points of fire or heat damage)
86-87	Animal blood
88-89	Humanoid blood
90-91	Monster blood
92-93	Jelly/jam
94-95	Monster plant seed
96-97	Monster plant spore
98-00	Monster fish eggs

5h. Magical Formula

01-06	Homonculous creation
07-12	Guardgoyle creation*
13-18	Spell (incomplete)
19-24	Golem formula
25-30	Protective circle formula
31-36	Sacaanti creation*
37-42	Iron cobra creation (MC:FF)
43-47	Crawling claw creation
48-53	Summon elemental creature formula (see Table 5e)
54-60	Mimic creation
61-66	Rohch creation **
67-72	Mummification process
73-78	Dread wolf creation (MCA1)
79-84	Stone wolf creation (MCA1)
85-90	Vampiric wolf creation (MCA1)
91-95	Black unicorn creation (MCA3)
96-00	Summon familiar notes

Note: Vampire or lich creation potion notes, (complete or incomplete) may be substituted for any unsuitable rolls.

Table 6: Materials

6a. Metals	
01-03	Plated only (reroll)
03-06	Blend of two (reroll)
07-13	Copper
14-20	Silver
21-30	Electrum
31-40	Bronze
41-50	Brass
51-60	Steel
61-70	Pewter
71-79	Iron
80-84	Gold
85-89	Platinum
90-96	Mithril
97-99	Adamantine
00	Unknown

6d. Woods

01-07	Oak
08-14	Ash
15-20	Birch
21-27	Pine
28-34	Cedar
35-40	Maple
41-47	Hickory
48-54	Cherry
55-60	Apple
61-67	Spruce
68-70	Treant wood
71-73	Dryad oak wood
74-80	Felsul*
81-85	Laspar*
86-90	Phandar*
91-00	Weirwood*

* = FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign set

** = FORGOTTEN REALMS *Ruins of Zhentil*

Keep Boxed Set

*** = AL-QADIM® *Assassin Mountain* Adventure set.

MCA 1-3 = *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* Annual 1-3.

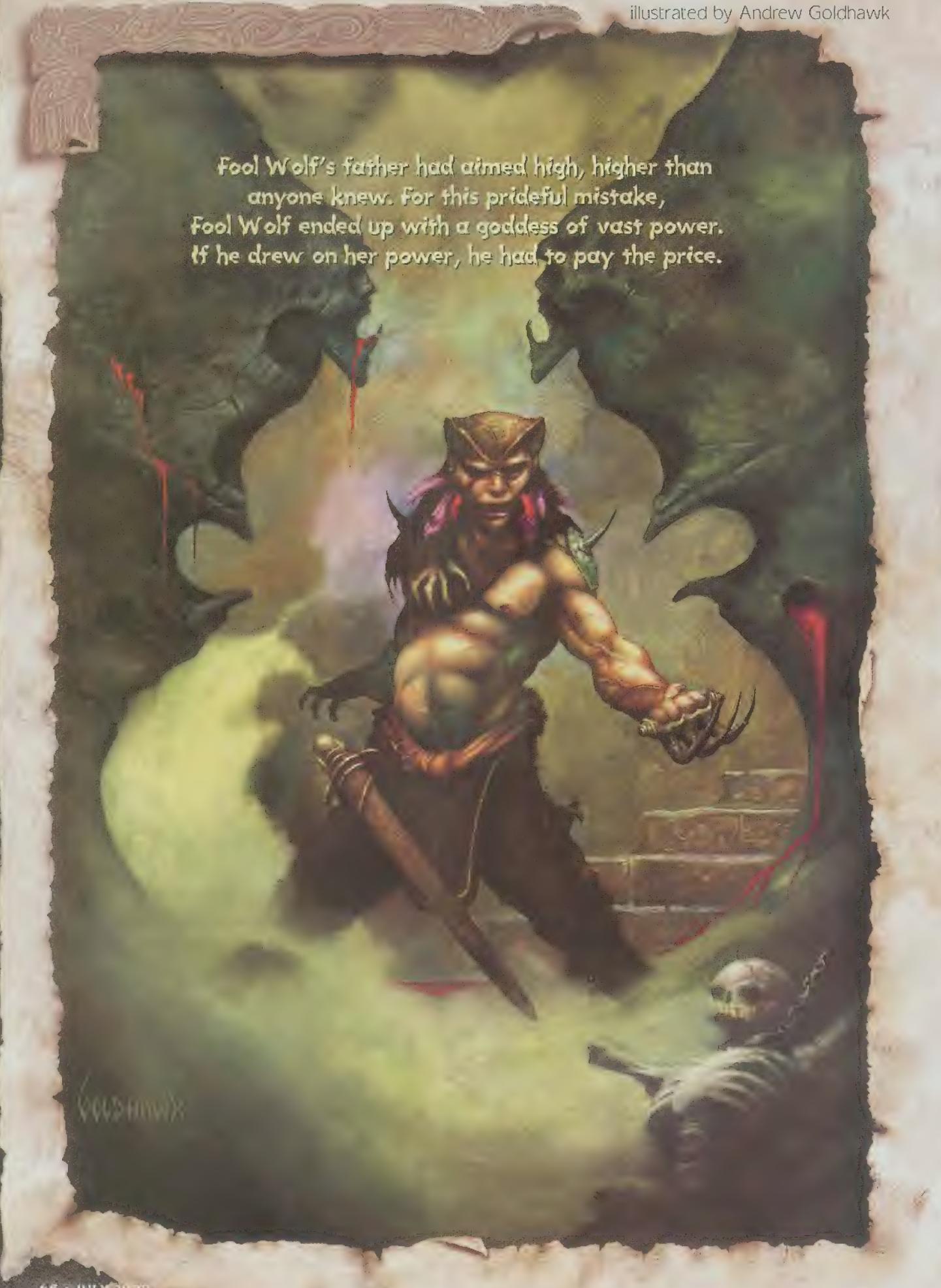
MC:FF = *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM FIEND FOLIO*™ Appendix.

6c. Materials

01-07	Velvet
08-14	Silk
15-21	Satin
22-29	Wool
30-37	Lace
38-44	Cloth of gold
45-52	Cloth of silver
53-60	Brocade
61-68	Exotic animal fur
69-76	Exotic animal leather
77-84	Exotic bird feather(s)
85-90	Monster feather(s)
91-96	Monster fur
97-00	Monster leather



Fool Wolf's father had aimed high, higher than anyone knew. For this prideful mistake, Fool Wolf ended up with a goddess of vast power. If he drew on her power, he had to pay the price.



THE FALLEN GOD

Fool Wolf awoke to the sounds of blood dripping and a goddess laughing. The blood was his own.

So was the goddess.

His body had a numb, drugged feeling, but he wasn't in pain. He opened his eyes and saw himself reflected in a dark mirror. It wasn't a very good mirror, but from what he could make out, he didn't look well. His long black hair hung tangled, matted, and unbound, and of his face, only his thin, arched nose was visible. His eyes were the black hollows of a ghost.

Plunk! Another drop of his blood hit the mirror, and ripples ruined his reflection. *Plunk. Plunk.*

He was hanging, spread-eagle and face down over a pool of blood. Small holes had been cut in the veins of his wrists, ankles, and neck. They should have closed up, they were so small, but they hadn't, so his blood would well, bead like sap on a wounded tree, then fall.

Good morning, his goddess said, still laughing.

Fool Wolf didn't answer but instead knotted his muscles to pull at the wire that lashed him to the wooden board above. A broad strap supported him at the belly.

His muscles didn't cooperate very much.

That was a fine time we had last night. A fine time.

Fool Wolf remembered—or partly remembered—and shuddered. "Well," he muttered, "it looks like we're going to pay for it. Or I am, anyway. Good luck finding someone else stupid enough to be your host."

An impression of teeth, cat's eyes, the musky odor of a snake came and went with her return laughter. *Nonsense. All you need do is let me loose again. Those wires are nothing.*

Fool Wolf closed his eyes. He remembered a girl and boy—how old? Fourteen, maybe. Twins. He remembered what the goddess had done to them, using his skin, his fingers, his...

"Oh, I don't think so," Fool Wolf said. "I'll manage on my own." The funny thing was, he couldn't remember how She had gotten loose.

When Fool Wolf was a boy, the shamans of his tribe—the *gaan*—had told his father that Fool Wolf would make a good shaman. To that end, his father had taken him on a search for a god to live in him, a spirit helper. It was the way it was usually done. Most *gaans* ended up with a weak, mildly useful god as the first guest in their "mansion of bone."

But Fool Wolf's father had aimed high, higher than anyone knew. And thus, through a prideful mistake, Fool Wolf had ended up with Chuugachik, not an ordinary goddess in any sense.

The nature of their relationship was simple. Chuugachik had vast power, but if Fool Wolf drew on it, he had to pay the price. The price was letting her use his body for a while, and he had quickly learned that such a price was unacceptable except when he had no other choice. So he kept her caged in his heart, locked up, and tried to ignore her when she cajoled him.

She had never gotten out before except when he called her. He could not remember calling her, this time. But he did remember—very vaguely—how it had ended.

"Someone stopped you last night," he said.

Absurd.

"No, I know you. You weren't finished. And then—" he couldn't remember. All he remembered was an old man with a beard, an irresistible command, oblivion.

"Ah. Awake at last."

Fool Wolf turned his head groggily. The pool was in a room made all of brick—ancient, yellowish brick that was so smooth and crumbly it almost resembled sandstone. It smelled like a charnel house. That was unsurprising, given the blood and the fact that the entire, dubious city of Rumq Qaj smelled that way.

The speaker was the old man from his memory. He looked as if he were carved from some very dark wood, but his long beard was whiter than ash. He was bald, but his head was tattooed with what might be some kind of writing. He wore bright robes of silk, mostly yellow and orange. "Do you remember me?" he asked. The language was that of Nhol, a city closer to Fool Wolf's faraway homeland. That was good—Fool Wolf could speak the local language, but not well.

"Yes, of course," he said.

"Good. You understand why you are feeding the gods?"

"That part I'm a little unclear on," he admitted. "I wonder if you might let me down while we discuss it?"

Plunk, plunk-plunk.

The old man walked closer. "No. Let's discuss it now." He smiled, revealing perfectly formed but yellow teeth. "My name is Haqul. I am the architect of this building you desecrated. It is my job to feed the Foundation, raise the towers—set things right when they are wrong."

Fool Wolf sighed. "What happened last night wasn't my fault. I—"

"You have a demon living in you. I rendered her quiescent."

Demon? The Nholish word actually meant "evil god," which had never made any sense to Fool Wolf. Gods weren't good or evil, they just were. Woodpecker gods were concerned about woodpeckers. Stream gods thought mostly about streams. Chuugachik was something like a cat, with a world of mice before her, though even he wasn't quite sure what she was a goddess of.

That's what he thought. What he said was, "Ah—then pardon me for asking, but if you understand that much, why am I being punished?"

The priest smiled again. "You aren't being punished. You are atoning. It's not the same thing. Your demon has no blood and so cannot atone, you see? You took blood from the Foundation. Now you give it back."

"The girl and boy?"

"Over the years they would have contributed much blood, helped keep the gutters of the Foundation wet. They were my grandchildren."

"I'm sorry. I didn't come here for that. I didn't come here to hurt anyone at all. I came to see if you could help me. Help me be rid of my—demon."

"Well, then you came to the right place. Once your blood is gone, you will be rid of her. Demons do not remain when blood lies quiet and dry."

"I was hoping for something that would leave me alive at the end."

"I might have done that, too. I might still."

Fool Wolf tried to keep his face neutral, but inside he felt a knot untie.

"What do you mean?"

"There are many ways to atone. This is one. I would like to suggest another."

"Does it involve me dying?"

"Not necessarily."

"Will I have to call on my goddess?"

"No. Would you like to hear the terms?"

Plunk.

"I don't have to. I accept."



Fool Wolf inhaled steam and a sharp scent that reminded him of crushed pine needles and orange skins. The bench was hot, the air was hot. He could barely breathe. They had given him a wine that closed his tiny wounds, but maybe that was just a trick. Maybe they intended to steam him to death.

The old man was in the darkened room with him, his gaunt, naked body barely visible in the orange eye of the coals.

"You need to regain your strength," Haql told him. This will help."

"Yes," Fool Wolf lied. "I feel stronger already. So—this other atonement."

"What do you know of our city?"

"That it's very old. That the gutters run with blood, day and night. That you have powerful sorcerers here."

"Sorcerers?" He looked puzzled at the Nholish word, for an instant, then his gaze sharpened. "You mean *Tarumq*. Them-that-raise-buildings. Architects."

"If you say it, it must be so. Is that what you are?"

"Yes. I am the eldest and chief architect of this building. It is one of the tallest seven, and the most venerable."

"How impressive." He remembered the city, surrounded by buildings so tall that no light touched the narrow streets, that only moss and mold grew in them. Buildings like great towers, with few windows. And he remembered entering one, its passages like close, dark caverns, and wondering how anyone could imagine living thus, much less doing it. His own people lived on the vast plains and prairies of Manghuugau and Falling Sky, and even they seemed too small at times.

But he still didn't remember why he had entered the building or how he had passed its massive bronze portals.

"When my ancestors came to this land," the old man went on, "nothing had ever been built here. Not a hut, not a single vault. We were called here to build."

"Called by the gods?"

Again that look of incomprehension followed by condescension. "Demons, you mean, such as infest your barbaric lands? No—the buildings called us, the foundations."

Now it was Fool Wolf's turn to blink. "I see." He saw all right. The old man had just said there weren't any buildings when his folk arrived, hadn't he? The old man was insane.

"A building has spirit before it has substance," Haql went on. "It has a plan before it has structure. You must know that. It was the buildings unbuilt that called us, made us their divine instruments. And over the ages we have perfected them, always building them taller, always coming closer to the truth they would have us realize."

"How noble. What was it you needed me for, again?"

"A demon has invaded our building. We are powerless against him. We need another demon to fight him. You."

Fool Wolf weighed that quickly. Why argue with the insane?

"I'm your demon, then. Tell me where he is, and I will kill him."

"He is in the uppermost story, the newest, where the Foundation watches the stars. That's where you will find him."

"Well, I ought to get started then, shouldn't I?"

"In a little while. When you are purified, and your strength has returned. We can wait that long, to ensure your success."



They fed him as if they were fattening a goat for slaughter, but they gave him only the weakest wine, never enough to get drunk. They sent him a woman, though, a pretty young thing,

perhaps nineteen years of age. She didn't speak any language he knew, or if she did, she did not do so. The door to his chamber—a low, ugly room with no windows—remained locked.

After the second night with the woman, he grew bored with her. She didn't object to sex—in fact, she initiated it—but she didn't seem enthusiastic about it, either, no matter what he tried. He started refusing her advances, and she spent most of her time in his room eating and sleeping.

After five days Haqul brought him his sword and his travel clothes.

"Follow the upward way," the architect said. "When you reach the sky, you will know you have come to where the demon is."

"And then?"

"When you are done, I will keep my bargain."

"I don't remember any bargain."

"The bargain is for freedom," the old man said. He motioned toward the door.

The stairways were damp and smelled of blood. Fool Wolf passed many rooms. In one, some sort of party was going on, perhaps thirty people eating and drinking, wearing masks that portrayed nothing he recognized. They fell silent when he passed them. He passed storage rooms and kitchens and sealed chambers, but after a time—a long time, it seemed—he passed empty rooms, and then rooms with occasional corpses, rotting untouched for weeks. They looked like soldiers, or guards. There were many on the stairwell.

He didn't like the look of that. He went back to one of the empty stories and began searching for a window. After an hour or so, he found one.

It was narrow and high, and the wall it ventilated was thicker than he was tall, but his whipcord body had no trouble easing through. The fresh air felt incredibly good in his lungs as he wriggled out onto the narrow ledge for a better view.

Outside it was twilight, the sky a sea of molten lead archipelagoed with floating islands of brass, copper, and gold. Against these hulked the other buildings of the city, cylinders of unreasonable bulk, black against the sky. The streets below—he guessed he could count twenty before he hit those slimy streets, should he fall—were already invisible save streams of tiny lights, flowing through the streets with their unseen bearers.

The ledge went nowhere, and the gray stone walls were almost but not quite sheer, tapering as they rose. He dug the tip of his knife into the brick and found it crumbly. He might be able to climb down using a burglar's steel claws, or knives affixed to hands and feet, but it didn't seem likely.

He went hunting through the storerooms and found, to his delight, several lengths of rope. He tested his weight on it by looping it through an ornately pierced and carved door lintel, and when he was satisfied it would hold him, starting knotting it together. He kept doing that until he had used all of the rope he could find, then returned to the window. He tied one end to a large cabinet—too large to fit through the window. Then,

bracing the rope around himself, he approached the ledge again.

Now it was pitch dark outside. The clouds had thickened to hide the stars. That was a beautiful girl with a witch for a mother—no one would see his escape, but neither would he know how far he had to drop when he came to the end of the rope.

Well, he would take the girl for now and worry about the mother when he came to her. He set his foot on the ledge—and froze, gripped by the most terrible fear he had ever known in his life. It wasn't even like fear, no more than tinder is a volcano. It filled his belly as if he had been cut open and had ice shoved in where his entrails ought to be. It shattered every thought in him, every wish and feeling. His arms and legs quivered, and his breath came in shallow, retching gasps. He practically fell back into the room.

A few seconds later, he felt better. What was there to be afraid of? He had no fear of heights, he knew that for a fact. He started toward the window again.

Seconds later, he was back in the room, shivering. *It's an enchantment*, his goddess told him.

I thought you protected me against things like that.

This one is too strong. I can help if you release me.

You lie, he replied.

If you say so. She purred, a black lioness with the eyes of a little girl.

Fool Wolf sat on the floor for a long time, thinking that this whole situation made no sense at all, trying to force the world to be reasonable. Then, cursing, he started up the stairs again.

He passed another seven or eight landings and noticed that something about the rooms had changed. There were no more corpses—well, plenty on the landings, but none in the rooms. Instead, there were numerous small cells, linked together by low doorways. Each apartment had a table set with plates, a chair, and a large urn. The plates contained the dried remains of food, probably about as old as the corpses he had seen below. The whole section reminded him of a honeycomb.

He searched through a few of these, and in the third he found a bottle of half-drunk wine. It had started going to vinegar, but he drank a little anyway as he puzzled at the small chambers.

He looked into one of the urns and blew the wine out of his nose and mouth, swearing. Red speckles appeared all over the polished white bones inside.

He ran back into the stairwell.

Ghosts. They kept rooms for their dead. He bounded up two flights, then slowed. If the ghost wanted to come after him, there wasn't much he could do about it. He should know—his own father had haunted him for months.

Oddly enough, after the initial worry passed, he felt a little comforted by the discovery. He was familiar with ghosts. His

people offered them food and wine, just as they might a god. Like gods, ghosts could enjoy only the scent of the food, the vapor of the wine, but they still appreciated it. In this city without gods, it was the first familiar thing he had found. The fact that these people, too, were bound to offer their dead some solace gave him hope that he might understand what was going on in time to keep him from becoming a ghost himself.

Still, ghosts you were related to were one thing—shades of dead strangers were another, especially when you drank their wine and spit it on their bones.

He climbed another five stories through more of the same. Finally he came to a large, iron-bound door hanging loose on one hinge. He drew his sword and crept near, peering through.

"Come in," the demon said.

At least, Fool Wolf assumed it was a demon. Gods and ghosts he knew—he still wasn't sure what demons were.

The demon—if it was that—looked pretty much like a man. A tall, lanky man to be sure, dark-skinned like the people in these parts, but with hair the color of a timber elk's hide—a dark, rich red. He wore a sort of quilted outfit that Fool Wolf guessed was the underpadding for the armor he saw resting on a table nearby. He had curling designs tattooed above his eyes that made him look constantly surprised. He was sitting in the sill of a large window—the largest Fool Wolf had seen in the building. Across his lap he held a two-edged sword half again as long as Fool Wolf's.

He looked tired, squinting at Fool Wolf in the light of an oil lamp.

"You aren't a ghost," he said. He spoke the language of Lhe, a tongue Fool Wolf knew well.

"No, I'm not," Fool Wolf replied, cautiously, in the same tongue. He slapped his hand against the doorpost, to emphasize his materiality.

"Good. I'm tired of killing ghosts, the poor bloodless bastards." He hopped down and stretched his arm out. His sword was really large, larger even than Fool Wolf had first thought, and the fellow was holding it in one hand as one might hold a willow wand. "You aren't wearing armor, so I won't ask you to wait while I put mine on. Do you have anything to say before we fight? Rites to perform? Do you need to pray?"

"Are you the demon?"

The man uttered a sharp laugh. "They told you I was a demon? No, the only demon here is locked in that closet." He gestured toward a huge iron cabinet or vault. "But if the priests of the demon sent you, I'm sure it's me they want you to kill."

This was getting confusing. "The architects sent me. The ones who run this building."

"Yes, as I said, the priests." He peered at Fool Wolf again. "You aren't one of them. You look like a northerner."

"I'm Mang," Fool Wolf replied.

"Mang? That's at the other end of the world. You came a long way to fight me."

"I didn't come to fight you at all," Fool Wolf said, starting to

feel irritated. "I came to Rumq Qaj for reasons of my own. These priests of yours captured me and told me if I came up here and killed you they would let me go."

"I wouldn't trust them. They are a foul, unnatural people."

"Well, we agree on that, at least. I would much prefer to leave, if you know a way."

"There's the window."

"I've tried that. The building won't let me leave."

"Really? How odd. Well, you might have to try to kill me then. Or—you could help me, and we could leave together. He placed the tip of his weapon on the ground. "I, bye the bye, am Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah, demon slayer. I have the sight and can see you have a totem god in you. I do, as well—perhaps you can see him. He is the Seven-Bearded Hawk, the fourth lightning strike. May I ask your totem?"

"I prefer not to say," Fool Wolf replied, stepping a little farther into the room. "It's against my custom. Would you care to explain to me what's going on here?"

"It's simple. This place is an abomination to the world. The gods hate it. I have come to put an end to it."

"This place? You mean this building?"

"I mean the whole city. I'm just starting with this tower."

Fool Wolf found he had nothing much to say to that, at least not at first. It finally came to him, though.

"What?"

"This city, above all those in the world, is depraved. They bleed old people and little children to feed the dark magicks that keep their towers standing. They perform unspeakable rites—"

"What business is that of yours? You were born five hundred leagues from here."

"If you have to ask that, you can't understand," the man said, his brows drawing his tattoos into a dark mass.

"Let me try again. Exactly what are you doing in this tower? In what way are you bringing their depredations to an end?"

"Ah. I'm going to slay their demon, the one who holds the tower up."

"The one locked in the cabinet."

"Yes."

"So it locked itself in there, to hide from you?"

"On the contrary. The priests locked it in there. It was the demon who called me."

"To come here and slay it."

"Yes."

Fool Wolf rubbed his jaw. "Forgive another untutored question. If you do manage to kill this demon—and if, as you say, its magic holds this tower up—won't the tower fall, and you with it?"

Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah contemplated that for a moment. "I suppose it might," he admitted.

"You suppose it might."

"That's what I said."

"How do you intend to kill the demons of all of the other towers if you die destroying this one?"

"Oh—I won't die. My sword Hukop is a god, too, brother to my totem. While I bear him, I can't be harmed by falls and the like." He frowned. "Though I suppose it might take me a long time to dig out of the rubble."

"Then it's hardly fair for us to fight, is it?"

"Oh—no, if you best me in a fair match, Hukop will let me die. It's only if I am attacked by cowardice or by inequitable numbers that he unnaturally preserves my life. He is an even-minded god."

"Very well, then. Do you know any way to free me of the curse that keeps me in this tower?"

"No. Odd that your totem spirit didn't protect you. It looks—strong—to me."

If you fight him without me, he will kill you, Chuugachik whispered through his bones. And kill him you must. They will never release us, otherwise.

Fool Wolf shrugged. "I don't know why my totem failed, only that she did. So—you've been here for two weeks and haven't been able to open the vault the demon is in. What makes you think you will ever get it open?"

"That's where I have a dilemma," Uzhdon said, a tinge of regret in his voice. "I've been fasting and communing with my totems, and I do now know what will open it. Human blood. This whole tower is built on it. It's mixed into the bricks. It's the mortar and the solvent of all of their evil magic. And it will open that door, make the demon fleshly enough to be slain."

"Well, the answer is simple, then. You need only let a little blood."

"Oh, I tried that," Uzhdon said, holding up his hand. A mass of scars covered his wrist like white caterpillars.

"Unfortunately, my totems take their task of protecting me very seriously. They would not allow me to bleed from a self-inflicted wound, not even a drop." He sighed wearily. "If only I had known this when I first stormed the place, it would be different. There was plenty of blood then. But after I reached this room, the priests stopped sending warriors after me. When I descend, hoping to be attacked, I find no one there. Once I went too far down and they almost trapped me, and I did get some blood then, but by the time I returned here, it was already too late—the blood was dead. It had no effect."

"How do you know this isn't just some fantasy of yours?"

"You have a totem—you understand."

Fool Wolf bit off telling the man that Chuugachik often lied to him.

"That brings me to my dilemma. They must have been sure you would beat me when they sent you—they wouldn't risk supplying me with fresh blood. If they were so certain of you, you must be a hero of some renown, and I am thus loath to slay you. I am also loath to let you slay me, for that would prevent me from accomplishing my purpose, and I'm not certain—you will forgive me—that I can count on you to use my blood to release the demon and slay it should you kill me."

"I pity you your dilemma," Fool Wolf said. "If it would be of help, I will swear a solemn oath to do exactly as you ask after

I've killed you."

"Truly?"

"Of course," he lied.

"And you would go to each tower and do the same?"

"Yes, I swear. You don't imagine I have any sympathy for these monsters, do you?"

The tattooed brow knitted again, and for a long moment, Fool Wolf actually thought the idiot would accept his offer.

"No," he said, finally, with great regret. "I cannot afford to be so trusting. I think we must fight."

"Very well," Fool Wolf said. "We shall fight, and whoever wins will use the blood of the other to release the demon and then kill it."

"You have a good nature and a noble heart, my friend."

"So I am often told," Fool Wolf replied. "Now—normally I wouldn't make much of this, you understand—but as you have a godsword and I have none, and as you have on under-armor and I have no armor at all—would you consider taking off the last, so we can fight on more even terms?"

"Oh. Yes, certainly. If you will wait a moment."

Fool Wolf folded his arms and leaned against the doorframe. Uzhdon started wriggling out of the garment, though being careful to keep one hand on the pommel of his sword, Fool Wolf noticed.

As soon as the garment was shucked up around Uzhdon's head, Fool Wolf rushed quickly forward, wrapped his arms around Uzhdon's knees, and with a single heave, threw the Opal of Nah out the window. The hero gave a single muffled yelp and was gone, his sword still clinging magically to his palm.

Fool Wolf looked down, but it was still dark outside, and the fear snatched at him again. He quickly withdrew into the room.

After a bit of searching, he found a mound of supplies that the warrior must have scrounged from the lower rooms. Most of it was gone, but there was stale bread and pretty good cheese and some suspicious-smelling sausages.

Sticking to the bread and cheese, he ate his fill and waited, ignoring the goddess snarling profanities inside him.

He tried not to fall asleep—Chuugachik had more power in his dreams than when he was awake. If she was displeased, she could make his dreams exceedingly unpleasant. She could even draw him partway into her shadowy world, a place where even powerful shamans feared to go.

And so it was with some concern, several hours later, than he watched a filmy presence approach him in the lamplight.

It looked like an animal that had forgotten what it was. It crawled across the floor on misshapen legs, one of which looked something like a cat's, another limb more like a knobbed hoof, a third something like a turtle's scaled and

THE FALLEN GOD

clawed foot. There was no fourth. Its face was a bloated mass with lizard eyes. It looked at him dolefully, and he realized that he could see through it, as he might a ghost.

"Help me," it said.

"You are the god of this tower, I presume."

It snorted and shuffled uncertainly. "I remember ..." it began, and then was silent for awhile, as if its words weren't a preface to a longer statement but a command to itself. But after a time it spoke again. He noted, with some interest, that it spoke Mang. "Long ago, I think. I lived here, but not here. I was something else. I remember things like columns, and things like gutters—"

"Trees? Rivers?"

"So you remember too?"

"I have seen them."

"Where?"

"Far from here. You used to be a *Huugaada*, didn't you?"

The thing made a sound he took for incomprehension.

"There are three sorts of gods," Fool Wolf said. "There are the *Huugaada*, who live in places—a grove, a hill—the *Mudune* who live in things—like the goddess in my chest, or the god in Uzhdon's sword. Then there are the *Yai*, the gods of the mountain and sky, who made the world, but who are not often seen. You were a god of a place."

The god snuffled a bit. "People came, and they gave me blood. I liked it, and they gave more. They asked if they could build something to honor me, and I told them they could. After that—" it paused for a very long time—"So long. I miss what was. I want to die, now. I'm tired."

"That's a shame," Fool Wolf said. "But I think, soon enough, you may get your wish."

"Will you kill me?"

"No. This is just the shadow of you. The real you is all around me, and I can't get to you."

"The other said he knew a way."

"He does. Like I said, I don't think you have to wait much longer."

It was around noon of the next day that Uzhdon burst back into the room, his huge sword in one hand and the bound, struggling form of Haqul gripped by the hair in the other.

"I salute you," Uzhdon said. "I should have thought of that long ago! You didn't have to push me, though—if you had only explained your plan, I would have seen the logic in it."

Fool Wolf grinned. "I couldn't be sure of that, though, could I? It's not natural to jump from this high, even if you know you will survive."

"Well—you do not know me as well as you might, so I forgive you. In any event, it was a perfect plan. They never expected me to come in through the front door again. At first all I could think about was getting revenge on you—that fall

hurt, even if it didn't kill me. But then I realized what you were up to. They had nowhere to run but up! And look, I captured the priest himself! Which is good for my conscience—I would have worried over sacrificing a lackey or slave, who might be associated with this evil through no choice of his own."

"Sacrifice?" squeaked the architect.

"Quiet," Uzhdon said. "You have spilled enough innocent blood to fill a sea."

"But we almost never kill anyone," Haqul protested. "A living person can always make more blood—a dead one can make none at all."

"Even better. We might not have to kill even you to free the demon."

"You're going to free the Foundation?"

"Yes. So we can kill it."

"You're insane."

"It wants to die."

"What has that to do with anything? Do you kill each person you meet who expresses an interest in suicide?"

"This is different. This is an abomination."

Haqul looked straight at Fool Wolf. "You want to be free?" He asked. "Then stop this madman."

Fool Wolf suddenly understood that the priest was not talking to him. He was talking to Chuugachik. The priest muttered something else in a language Fool Wolf didn't understand.

But suddenly he felt his teeth ache to be sharper than razors, his fingers envious of talons, and thoughts like angry wasps filling his mind.

Now, Chuugachik shrieked, triumphantly. Now, now, now!

And he remembered. This was how it had happened before. He had come to the city—to this building—seeking a sorcerer who could rid him of his terrible companion. And the sorcerer had set her free.

Only for a time, always just for a time, until she grew tired and sated with her horrible games.

He promised to make you ascendant if you tricked me, thought Fool Wolf. He promised to give you my body.

It's only what I deserve, sweet thing. I gave myself to you, to you alone of all men and women. Yet you spurn me, cheat me, deprive me. You could be the greatest Gaan, the greatest shaman who walks the earth, who has walked it in four hundred years. Yet you refuse me!

The price is too high.

You lie. You love me. You love what we do together.

Fool Wolf remembered the little boy and girl, how their screams of pain had sounded like sweet music, had aroused him to the core. He remembered his first love, a cross-cousin from his father's family, how she had died without ever fully believing what her lover was doing to her. He remembered a woman he had spent a single night with, staked out in the sun to die, her eyelids cut away, and himself watching her, and humming a little tune.

He remembered the joyous feeling of power when the goddess had his body, his enemies breaking like Nholish glass beneath a hammer.

This priest can give us all of that, my sweet, forever.

She was winning. He could feel his soul starting to swim to the little place he lived when she used his limbs. The architect was bringing her out.

The price is freedom. Not his freedom from the tower, nor his freedom from Chuugachik—but *her* freedom to walk in his skin.

But if Haql could do all of that, maybe he could take her out of him, as Fool Wolf had wanted in the first place.

She was winning. Soon they would be free, together, as it ought to be, and he could stop denying ...

He was barely aware that he did it. Perhaps that's why she wasn't able to stop him, jerk his arm away. He did it on instinct, like a man finding his bed in the dark. His knife was in his hand and out if it, just like that, a silver fish in the air, a little tower standing out of Haql's eye. The other eye stared wide, first at him, then through him, then nowhere.

Fool Wolf's heart snapped closed on the screaming goddess like the lid of a coffin, and her voice went out—for the moment.

He blinked. Uzhdon's blade was poised to split him in half.

"Why?" Uzhdon said.

"You have the sight. You saw."

"Yes. I saw him invoke your totem. It is—"

"It is contained," Fool Wolf gasped. "Use his blood while it is still alive."

Uzhdon hesitated for a few seconds, then nodded. Haql's heart was still beating when the hero cut his throat and bled him onto the vault.

The blood boiled like smoke. The vault began to creak open.

"We will talk when I am done with this," Uzhdon murmured. "That thing which dwells in you is fouler than anything that lives in this city."

"I know," Fool Wolf said. "I came here to be rid of her."

"She will have you one day. She must be stopped."

Fool Wolf glanced at Uzhdon, but the hero wasn't even looking at him. He was watching the misshapen god manifest and limp from the vault.

Fool Wolf threw him out the window again. It was harder, this time. The hero managed to spin and get off a vicious slash with his sword, and he was hideously strong. Fool Wolf watched a forelock of his own hair follow Uzhdon toward the distant street. That close.

"Kill me," said the pathetic little god behind him.

"No," Fool Wolf said.

"Please."

"No. What's the point? You're free now. Do what you want. They built this prison out of your own will and their blood. It's yours to tear down if you want. But I won't help. It isn't my business."

With that he turned and made his way quickly down to the level where he had left the rope.

He felt sick again when he approached the window, so he cracked his heart a bit to speak to Chuugachik.

"You can stop it now. It was never any enchantment on me—just you. You struck a bargain with the architect, and he let you have just enough power to keep me from leaving the tower. Now he's dead, and your bargain is done."

You are such a stupid, stupid man.

"Whatever you say. If we wait here, Uzhdon will find us, and he will cut me to bits, and you will be stuck here in this tower of blood, in this place where they entomb gods alive. Your choice."

He felt her fury, a hundred thunderstorms, a shedding snake. The very air before his eyes seemed to vibrate with it. Then it was suddenly gone, her anger as fickle as everything else about her. For an instant a vision of her swallowed his senses—naked, supple, hard-muscled, soft-fleshed, straddling down on him, tangled hair falling across her face, green eyes flashing, mouth curving in terrible glee, breasts pressing against his own chest with shivering heat, and the scent of her flesh as it sank against and into his own.

She laughed, and the image vanished. Later, then. Later. And the gates of his heart shut again. His fear was gone, and he went down the rope like a monkey. It was midday, but he didn't care.

He came up thirty feet short of the street, but a cart full of melons passed under him, so he kicked out from the wall and let go, landing among the fruit with a wet sound. Ignoring the vendor's inarticulate curses, he climbed out of the sticky mess and down onto the street.

Something hit the ground next to him. It was a chunk of brick.

He looked up. The tower was swaying weirdly, like a tall cane in a high wind.

He figured it was time to leave. He ran up the mildewed streets of Rumq Qaj and didn't look back, even when he heard a sound like an avalanche.

Outside of the city gates, he stopped running. Everyone was going the other way to see what was happening, making it fairly simple for him to acquire a horse, one with well-provisioned saddlebags already strapped on.

Would Uzhdon stay to destroy the other buildings, or had Fool Wolf given the hero a better, more important cause? Whichever, he imagined he had a pretty good head start. It was bound to take a few hours, at least, to dig out from under a fallen god.

Greg Keyes lives in Seattle, Washington with his wife Nell and their three lovely dogs, Ofi, Jake, and Beanie.

Me and My Shadow

Your hero
might cast a
long shadow...
but that's not
necessarily
a good thing.



by
Spike Y. Jones

Illustrated by
Jim Crabtree



ONE OF A PERSON'S MOST INTIMATE AND ENIGMATIC possessions is his shadow. Children are fascinated by them; vampires are deprived of them. With shadows' ephemeral existence at the divide between light and dark, mages have made a wide variety of magical items that exploit their nature.

The methods of creating some shadow-based magical items, like the *shadow-stealer rod* and the *shadow puppet gloves*, were concocted by minor human wizards in the relatively recent past. Two others, the *cloth of shadows* and the *crown of shadow control*, are unique items. Whether created by gods, archmages, or the combined power of many wizards is unknown, nor is there a method (short of a *wish* spell) by which these creations can be duplicated.

The origins of some items—including *arrows of the dark curtain*, *eyes of soothing darkness*, and *shadow snares*—are accurately recorded in the annals of the elven races, for they were products of the ancient wars that drove a wedge between the elves of the Underdark and those of sunlight. Items in this group are manufactured to this day, though they might not be easy to find outside of drow society.

Arrow of the Dark Curtain

This drow-created magical item is common in drow society and is also found in a hand-crossbow dart variety. Although these black arrows can function normally as weapons, they are usually employed as distractions before and during combat, or to cover a retreat.

When this arrow is in flight, a curtain of impenetrable darkness falls straight to the ground below it, creating an arched barrier with a top edge that matches the path of the arrow, ending at the point where the arrow sticks, be it in

a tree, a person, or the ground. The resulting wall of darkness is only as thick as the arrow itself, but it is as inky black as a moonless night. It has no solidity, so creatures can walk through with ease, but it casts a shadow and can be used by drow for protection from direct sunlight.

The curtain disappears the moment the arrow is broken, removed from its target, or moved. (So shooting one into a moving target is likely to cause only a momentary curtain of darkness.) Otherwise, the wall lasts for 1d6 turns. The wall can be eliminated by a *dispel magic* spell, and a *continual light* spell destroys those sections of the curtain it touches. One can "erase" the curtain by walking along its length while carrying an item enchanted with a *continual light* spell. A *light* spell temporarily blots out a section of the curtain equal to the spell's area of effect, but when the magical light is moved, the curtain reforms.

As with other drow-created magical items, *arrows of the dark curtain* lose their powers after 2d6 days of exposure to sunlight. Each *arrow of the dark curtain* may be used only once before losing its enchantment.

XP Value: 250 GP Value: 1,500

Cloth of Shadows

There is a famous story of a thief who met a grisly end after a short but spectacular career. Known only as the Shadowthief, he spent years amassing the fortune he needed to hire a wizard to

create the unique magical item he needed to become a legend.

The wizard wove a magical material dubbed *cloth of shadows*, which the Shadowthief then had tailored into a body suit. When worn, the suit acted as if its wearer had cast a *transport via shadows* spell, with special lenses over the eyes that gave him *shadow sight*. With these abilities, it became easy to invade some of the best-guarded treasures in a host of kingdoms, making himself rich and feared in a matter of months.

Unfortunately, his string of successes made him brazen. When he was eventually seen making his robberies, he thought nothing of it. After all, the guards may have seen him, but they still hadn't been able to stop him. But when the stories of the witnesses circulated, a method of stopping the Shadowthief was easy enough to devise.

The last robbery the Shadowthief attempted was actually a trap set specifically for him. All of the valuables in the room he wanted to burglarize were moved away from the walls into the center of the chamber, and guards, armed with axes and *potions of speed*, were stationed behind well-lit, blind corners where they couldn't be seen by anyone scrying through shadows. When the Shadowthief entered, the guards drank their *potions* and rushed forward, swinging their axes with abandon. The Shadowthief was caught only halfway through the shadow-portal, and his head and arms were severed from his body, which fell back through the portal, never to be found. Unlike most magical items that lose their enchantment once damaged, the *cloth of shadows* was not easily denatured.

Eventually, the damaged *cloth of shadows* pieces were separated and found to still work after a fashion. The headpiece became a device known as the *shadow mask*, which granted the wearer the *shadow sight* ability but no other powers. The upper torso piece was turned into a pair of *shadow sleeves*, which allow the wearer to perform a *transport via shadows* spell involving only his arms; he can reach into a distant shadow, grab whatever he might find on the other side, and then retract his arms to safety. Used in conjunction, the *shadow mask*

and the *shadow sleeves* are almost as useful as the entire suit was to the Shadowthief, but if they become separated, their utility is reduced somewhat.

The lower body of the Shadowthief was never found, and if his hidden lair is ever located, not only will the riches he stole be discovered but there might also be yards of *cloth of shadows* still clinging to his bones, ready to be reworked into other magical items. If all the separated pieces of the *cloth of shadows* are brought together and magically repaired (using *mend* and *permanency* spells), a new Shadowthief could walk the dark corners of the world.

Shadow Mask:

XP Value: 1,000 GP Value: 20,000

Shadow Sleeves:

XP Value: 750 GP Value: 15,000

Complete Suit:

XP Value: 3,000 GP Value: 50,000

Crown of Shadow Control

At some time in the forgotten past, a god's curse created two undead races from the peoples of two warring nations: shadows and slow shadows.

While most adventurers think of them as nothing more than mindless, life-hating killers, there is a malevolent motivation behind their attacks: The war between the two peoples continued after their transformation into undead monsters, and slaying the living is their means of recruiting members into their armies. Like any army, either race would be a powerful tool for anyone who could control them.

Centuries ago, a unique magical item was crafted for this purpose, and as it has passed from hand to hand over the decades. Only two hidden flaws have prevented it from being used in a devastating war against the living.

The *crown of shadow control* takes the form of a simple diadem adorned with large black gemstones in the front. The wearer gains the ability to control undead shadows and slow shadows as if *charm monster* spells had not been cast on the creatures, but unlike victims of a *charm monster* spell, the controlled shadows cannot break the *crown's* spell. The *crown's* wearer is able to converse with the shadows or slow shadows under his or her control, but any shadows in the



vicinity who aren't under the crown's sway are beyond his or her communicative abilities. There is no limit to the number of shadows or slow shadows that can be controlled (at a maximum rate of one new addition per round), but there are risks to creating a large shadow army.

The *crown's* user has a chance of becoming a shadow or slow shadow. Every day (or part thereof) that he or she uses the *crown*, there is a 1% chance of permanently losing a point of Wisdom *per shadow controlled*; thus, controlling ten shadows for a single day would be as risky as controlling a single shadow for ten days.

Each drop in Wisdom is accompanied by a darkening of the victim's skin. If the user's Wisdom is ever reduced to 0, the darkening process is completed, and he or she finally turns into a shadow, the crown dropping to the ground where the victim's feet once were.

The *crown* can be used to control members of only a single side of the eternal war at a time. If the wearer is currently controlling any number of shadows and then tries to control even a single slow shadow, or vice versa, then all of the controlled undead are released from domination and immediately filled with a raging desire to kill the wearer. While this flaw doesn't automatically result in the transformation into a shadow or slow shadow, the larger the army the *crown's* wearer has assembled, the greater the likelihood he or she will fall. Because of the difficulty of detecting shadows and slow shadows, and the fact that it is relatively easy to confuse one shifting shadow shape for another, this defect can trip the careless.

Neither of these flaws is revealed by an *identify* spell. The *legend lore* spell reveals the fate of the previous wearers of the *crown* (virtually all of whom were transformed into shadows or slow shadows, either through the Wisdom drain or as a result of combat with enraged shadows after triggering the *crown's* other flaw) without betraying the reason for their transformations.

XP Value: Nil **GP Value:** 25,000

Eyes of Soothing Darkness

These crystal lenses fit over the user's eyes, providing protection from bright light, both magical and mundane. A person wearing *eyes of soothing darkness* cannot be blinded by a *light* or *glitterdust* spell (although the other effects of the spell would still apply; a *blindness* spell has its normal effect), while the wearer receives a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. spells that manipulate light to cause damage (such as *color spray*), confusion (such as *blur* or *hypnotic pattern*), or illusions (such as *phantasmal force* or *mirror image*).

Unfortunately, the *eyes* make it harder to discern subtle movement in the dark, so a thief (or a shadow or slow shadow) has a 10% greater chance of avoiding detection using the *Hide in Shadows* ability if the spotter is wearing *eyes of soothing darkness*.

These items are popular among dark elves and are often found worked into drow battle helmets. In addition to these effects, drow wearing these *eyes* suffer a 1-point reduction in Dexterity and a -1 penalty to attacks when in the radius of a *light* spell, and subjects of spells cast by *eye*-wearing drow gain only a +1 bonus to saving throws if the drow is in a *light* spell's radius, or no bonus at all if they themselves are in the radius.

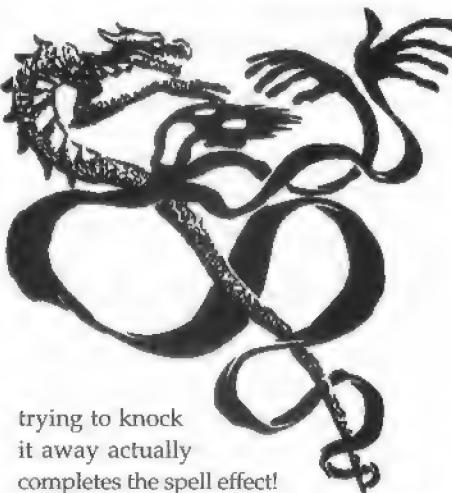
XP Value: 250 **GP Value:** 1,250

Shadowstealer (Wizard, Thief)

These thin, polished ebony rods vary in length from 2-5 feet and are usually not decorated, although a few have been seen with carved gargoyles and grotesques at one end.

To use a *shadowstealer*, the wielder simply places it on the ground or against a wall so that it touches the shadow of

the intended victim. The wielder then traces (with the rod) a line from the outermost tip of the shadow (usually the head) to the person's body (typically the feet). If this is done without interruption, the victim's shadow is sucked into the rod. Understandably, this process is difficult to accomplish without raising the suspicions of the victim, and most wielders prefer to take this action while invisible or hidden, or while the victim is distracted. If the victim is aware of the wielder's actions, he or she can attempt to disrupt the attempt simply by moving out of the way (a successful Dexterity check, modified by the rod-holder's reaction adjustment, if any); making contact with the rod while



trying to knock it away actually completes the spell effect!

The effect of the *shadowstealer* is that the victim gradually weakens without his shadow. He or she cannot sleep restfully or regain lost hit points, spells, or temporarily drained ability scores, except by way of curative spells.

After 1d8 days of this, other things begin happening, like gradual memory loss (from little things like a friend's eye color, and magical spells, to item command words). The victim's appetite eventually falls off (within 2d8 weeks), causing deterioration, clumsiness, pale-ness, and other signs of obvious distress; eventually people might mistake the victim for a vampire as he or she gains the sallow and unhealthy look of the undead. None of these effects lead directly to death, so a *shadowstealer* makes an inefficient weapon, but since the various afflictions can only be corrected by the reverse tracing of the rod, a thief can use it for highly effective extortion plots.

While the rod could be used on any creature that casts a shadow, it has no effect on the monster of the same name.

XP Value: 5,000 **GP Value:** 20,000

Shadow Pin

These rune-inscribed silver nails can be used to pin people or monsters to the ground simply by pinning their shadows there. If used on any normal creature, the task involves the user successfully placing the nail and driving it into the ground. If the victim attempts to avoid the attack, an attack roll with no modifier for armor or shield must be made. Driving the nail into a soft surface like open soil requires no tools, driving it into a wooden floor requires a hammer, and driving it into a hard surface like stone requires a hammer and a successful Strength check. The *shadow pin* can also be used on an undead shadow, requiring an attack roll and at least 3 points of damage caused in a single attack (the pin inflicts 1d4-1 points of damage when used as a weapon).

The victim of a *shadow pin* suffers no ill effects, except that he or she is rooted to the spot where the shadow is fixed, unable to move except in a circle around the point of attachment. The time of day (or the angle of the dominant light source) determines how long the shadow is and thus how far the individual can move. The victim has the greatest freedom of movement just after sunrise or just before sunset, suffering only a -2 penalty to Dexterity for the purposes of dodging attacks. Each quarter of the morning or afternoon closer to noon increases the penalty by -1 until the victim suffers a -6 penalty to Dexterity at noon.

Removing the *shadow pin* takes about the same amount of effort as driving it into the ground; it can be pulled out of a soft surface with minimal effort, from wood with a Strength ability check or with little effort if the victim has an appropriate tool, and from a hard surface only with both a Strength check and a proper tool. An undead shadow would not be able to remove a *shadow pin* from a hard surface. An animal will likely put all its efforts toward ripping itself free from the pin, even if it has no chance of making a successful attempt,



thus leaving itself open to attack.

XP Value: 500 GP Value: 2,500

Shadow Puppet Gloves

These elbow-length black cloth gloves allow the wearer to summon material from the Demiplane of Shadow to create and animate realistic shadows of animals: lions, cats, dogs, birds, etc. The wearer must make a traditional shadow puppet image on a flat surface, then utter a command phrase that includes the name of the creature depicted.

Once the phrase is completed, the part of the *gloves* that is not needed to create the shadow (e.g., everything below the wrists in a bird shadow puppet) ceases to cast a shadow, and the puppet ceases to look like a shadow cast by human hands, instead taking on the appearance of an actual shadow of the animal in question, free to move about as the shadow normally could. The shadow is, of course, restricted in that it can only move where the user casts it, but clever manipulation of body position and light sources can make the shadow perform in imaginative ways.

While such images have their entertainment value, they can also be used in combat, the puppets having powers similar to those caused by a *shadow monsters* spell, except that the damage they cause is equal to that of a normal animal of their type (e.g., 1d4 for a dog bite, but 0 damage from the shadow of a pigeon), and they can all withstand 12 points of damage before being dispelled.

Each pair of *gloves* can be used a specific number of times or length of time per day (usually 1d6 times, or for a combined total of 3d12 rounds), and the

user can switch from one animal form to another in 1 round. Each set of *gloves* can create a number of predetermined animal shapes (typically 1d6), so a pair of *shadow puppet gloves* able to create an eagle, a camel, and a spider might not be able to create a convincing illusion of a horse or fish.

XP Value: 1,500 GP Value: 10,000

Shadow Snare

This favorite weapon of assassins is an easily concealed garrote magically crafted from the shadow of a real piece of cord attached to two enchanted garrote handles. The cord can't be cut by normal weapons—they pass right through it—but someone holding both handles can command it to become substantial toward one substance such as flesh or stone. Thus, if used as a garrote, the killer could command the snare to be solid toward flesh, in which case it could strangle a man like a normal cord, but the victim would be able to pull it free with his or her bare hands. If the assassin commanded the cord to be solid toward the fabric of the victim's shirt collar, the victim's hands would be effective at pulling it free only if the victim could slip his or her fingers under the collar or was wearing gloves of the same fabric as the shirt.

While a *shadow snare* is exposed to magical light (such as that created by some magical weapons or a *light* spell, but not the light produced incidentally by a *fireball* spell) it cannot be made solid to *any* substance and only its handles keep it from disappearing forever.

Magical light doesn't destroy the *snare*, and once it is removed from the light it behaves normally. If a pair of adversaries grab the *snare*'s two solid handles, they can struggle over it and possibly break it (on a successful open doors roll); the substance to which the cord is substantial cannot be changed while two different people are holding the handles. Another way to destroy a *shadow snare* is to destroy the real cord from which it was made, a talisman which is rarely stored in the same place as the *shadow snare*.

Sometimes a length of rope is used to create a *shadow rope*. Weightless and with no encumbrance, it makes an excellent

piece of general purpose adventuring gear. Some ingenuity might be required to use it, however; while it's sometimes equipped with metal hooks or end caps to give the user something to grasp at either end, a *shadow rope* commanded to be solid to a rock cannot be grasped except by rocky hands.

When the *shadow snare* was first invented during the early years of the war between the elves of light and darkness, its use was so common that all elves quickly learned to recognize a *shadow snare* on sight, thus giving the victim the knowledge needed to thwart it (either by casting a *light* spell in the area, or by struggling with the assassin over control of the handles instead of uselessly scrabbling at the immaterial cord). As the centuries after the war passed, this knowledge became less common, and now the average elf has only a percentage chance equal to one-tenth his or her age of recognizing a *shadow snare* for what it is when he or she first encounters one. Non-elves who don't possess special knowledge of elf/drow history and lore have no chance of automatically recognizing one.

Garrote:

XP Value: 500 GP Value: 5,000

Rope:

XP Value: 1,000 GP Value: 10,000



Spike Y. Jones started his first D&D® game campaign in 1978 using a mishmash of the then-newly-released Basic Set, and the then-incomplete AD&D® rules, run from behind a home-made pink cardboard DM's screen. Some things have changed, but he's still running games with mix-and-match rules and home-made additions.

DESIGN A CREATURE FROM THE DEMIPLANE OF SHADOW

Shadows, shades, and umbrimals are not the only monsters that dwell in the evershifting darkness of the Demiplane of Shadow. The Demiplane is infinitely vast and contains all manner of shadowborn creatures. The native denizens of this plane typically have one thing in common: they're all composed of shadowstuff. However, some look like dark, half-formed apparitions, while others look as fleshy and substantial as the Prime Material beings who occasionally visit (or find themselves trapped in) this forlorn plane.

We want you to design a new denizen of the dark plane. Send us your new Demiplane of Shadow creature in *Monstrous Compendium*® format. **Each entry is limited to 750 words.** Illustrations are optional.

Entries will be judged on originality, design, and AD&D® game compatibility. All entries must be received by **August 30, 1999**.

One winning entry and three "honorable mentions" will be selected. **The winner will receive a \$100 prize package** including a one-year subscription to *DRAGON® Magazine*. Furthermore, *DRAGON Magazine* reserves the right to publish the winner and the three honorable mentions in an upcoming issue!



"Design a Creature From the Demiplane of Shadow" Contest Rules

1. **Entry:** To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your new creature ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR") *Dragon Magazine* "Demiplane of Shadow" Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many Entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries should not exceed 750 words. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), August 30, 1999. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's design, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. **Originality of Entry:** Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. **Use and Ownership of Entry Info:** In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in entry to TSR and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. **Prizes:** The winning Entrant of the "Demiplane of Shadow" Contest shall receive a \$100 prize package consisting of a one-year subscription to *DRAGON Magazine* (value \$34.95 U.S.) and new TSR game products.

"Demiplane of Shadow" Contest

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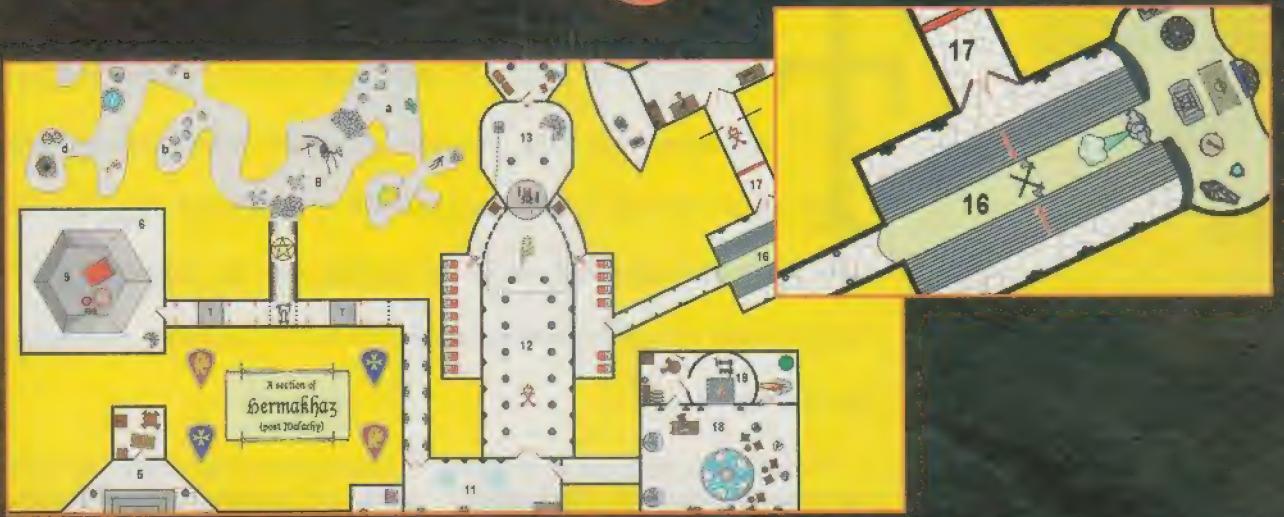
5. **Eligibility:** Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. **Restrictions:** Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to *DRAGON Magazine* "Demiplane of Shadow" Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by September 17, 1999. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

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The design revolution goes underground!



An optimist says
the room is
half lit ...

by
Spike Y. Jones

Shady Palms spell by Scott Sheffield

illustrated by
Bob Klasnich

Conjuring in the Half-Dark

THE REST OF THE GROUP HAD BEEN CONVINCED to accompany me with promises of untold riches, trophies, and magical treasures in the abandoned lair of a powerful mage, but the only thing that interested me in the mission was the possibility that I might retrieve the spellbooks of that long-gone master illusionist, Heriabgher, the *Midnight-Mage*.

I was ultimately successful in my quest, but not all of my comrades can say the same—or could say the same if they were alive.

Our journey was quite uneventful as such things go: We faced the usual assortment of adversaries and adversities, and only the foreknowledge that we were exploring the lair of a master of illusions told us that some of the threats we faced were insubstantial.

When we reached the mage's abandoned study, I made immediately for the two spellbooks displayed on a wide pedestal.

Neither of the simple leather-bound tomes had a visible lock, but I could not pull their covers apart. There seemed to be some give to them, but try as I might, I couldn't open them. Casting a quick dancing lights spell in hopes that I could discover the magic keeping them shut, I found that even the small amount of give that had been present before was gone.

Frustrated, I threw the smaller book to the ground where, in the shadows under the book stand, it casually opened of its own accord.

Astounded, I ordered my floating lights close so that I could see what happened when I duplicated the trick with the larger tome, but despite a resounding crash, the second refused to open.

*I later discovered that the trick to the Shadowbooks of Heriabgher was that they, being crafted by a maestro of darkness, resisted opening in proportion to the amount of light that shone on them. In full sunlight, it would take the muscles of a giant to pull them apart, while the merest of mice could creep under the covers in absolute darkness. Once I knew this, I could open the larger tome and discover in it the many standard spells that the *Midnight-Mage* had learned during his life. The smaller volume proved to be the more interesting of the two: It contained those spells that Heriabgher had either created himself or learned from secret sources. Some of these were mere variants of commonly available incantations, others were novel and quirky, while a few were monstrous in their implications.*

Fortunately, or unfortunately, the most frightening of the spells had apparently been written on the final pages of the tome, but these had been ripped from the binding at some time in the past. All that remained of them was a notation on the last intact page: "What follows is the formula for the transformation of an archmage into a shadow-lich."

—Anhurhotep Akhuhekai,
Mage of Light

Dispel Light

(Abjuration)

Level: 1

Range: 60 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 30' cube

Saving Throw: None

This variation of the *dispel magic* spell neutralizes *dancing lights*, *light*, and *continual light* spells. The method used to determine how well the magical light resists being dispelled is the same as for *dispel magic*.

For the purposes of this spell, a *continual light* spell is treated as an enchanted item; if the *dispel light* is cast on the exact spot or item upon which the *continual light* has been cast, it dispels the light normally (assuming the *continual light* spell's resistance is overcome), but if it is cast only on an area illuminated by a *continual light* spell (and not the source of the light itself), the *dispel light* eliminates magical light in the area of effect for 1d4 rounds.

Dispel light has no effect on nonmagical light. Casting the spell on an area lit by torches or lanterns yields no measurable effect.

Shadow Lock

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 15 square feet/level

Saving Throw: None

Similar to the *wizard lock* spell, *shadow lock* seals a door, chest, or other openable portal or object. The spell also leaves a keyhole-shaped mark on the surface of the portal or object, although no actual hole is created. Anyone who knows the secret to bypassing the spell can open the door with ease; otherwise, the *shadow-locked* portal or object can only be opened by physical force or by casting a successful *dispel magic* or *knock* spell. A *knock* spell does not remove the *shadow lock* but does negate it for 1 turn.

A shadow or other creature from the Negative Material Plane can pass through the *shadow locked* door as if it

were unlocked, as can any extra-planar creature with 4 or more Hit Dice.

The trick to bypassing the *shadow lock* is to hold one's hand in such a way as to make the shadow of a particular hand position (predetermined by the caster), and then pass that shadow over the keyhole mark on the surface so that the shadow pantomimes the act of inserting a real key into a real keyhole. A twist of the hand (and shadow) unlocks the lock, which remains unlocked until relocked by reversing the movements of the hand shadow.

Because the position of the light sources around the door can make it impossible to cast a shadow of exactly the right sort, mages desiring easy access through the *shadow locked* portal often place a lamp or other light source in the correct position. Security-minded mages ensure that any light sources near the *shadow lock* are in deliberately incorrect positions.

The *shadow lock* spell cannot be cast on portcullises or objects that are already locked magically (such as a *wizard locked* door) or held open by a *hold portal* spell.

while under close observation, although their chance of success is reduced by 10% because the shadows aren't stationary or predictable. Creatures with close ties to the Demiplane of Shadow can move and attack while hiding amid the shadows, gaining a -4 bonus to Armor Class within the spell's area of effect.

Since the movements of the *dancing shadows* are random and unpredictable, missile attacks through or within the affected area suffer a -1 penalty.

The *dancing shadows* are dense enough to diminish the effectiveness of *light* or *continual light* spells, halving their areas of effect. A successful *dispel magic* negates the *dancing shadows* spell.

Obedient Shadow

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 2

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 30'-radius circle

Saving Throw: None

This spell conjures a circular, semi-sentient shadow from the Demiplane of

Dancing shadows are dense enough to diminish the effectiveness of *light* or *continual light* spells, halving their areas of effect.

Dancing Shadows

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 2

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 5' radius/level

Saving Throw: None

This spell—a favorite among shadow dragon spellcasters—creates a roiling mass of leaping shadows in the area of effect. The shadows have no physical substance, inflict no damage, and cause no peculiar sensations except a slight chill. These shadows aren't undead and cannot be turned by priests, although this is not immediately apparent.

Rogues within the radius of a *dancing shadows* spell can Hide in Shadows even

Shadow that obeys the caster's spoken commands.

The summoned shadow cannot float free in the air; it must always remain draped across some surface, its circular shape distorted by the shape of the object underlying it. It can move anywhere within 30 feet of the caster, travelling at a movement rate of 6, at all times maintaining contact with surfaces in the area. If it is ordered to cross a gap such as a chasm where there are no surfaces for the shadow to rest upon, the shadow travels as far as it can before halting and waiting for new commands. Controlling the movements of the *obedient shadow* requires the caster's full concentration; the caster cannot perform other actions during the round the *obedient shadow* is moved or its size is altered.

In its natural form, the *obedient shadow* appears as a flat, shadowy circle 6 inches in diameter, but it can expand to a radius of up to 30 feet at the caster's will. Any creature or object within the circle of shadow appears darker. The darkening pall extends to a height equal to the *obedient shadow*'s diameter; thus, a 10'-diameter circle would completely darken any creature or object up to 10 feet tall.

A *light* or *continual light* spell negates the darkening effect of the *obedient shadow*, although it is not dispelled and may be moved out of the magical light's area of effect. A successful *dispel magic* negates the *obedient shadow* permanently.

Creatures completely darkened by the *obedient shadow* have a base 20%

This variation of the *clairvoyance* spell lets the caster see in his or her mind some other specified location within range. The target area must be familiar to the caster. Also, if there are no shadows in the location specified, the spell simply doesn't work. The caster must be in shadow while casting and employing the *shadow sight* spell; if he or she is in a dimly lit place without shadows, there is a 25% chance that the spell fails when cast; in bright sunlight, the glow of a *continual light* spell, or total darkness, the chance of failure increase to 50%.

What the caster sees depends on the prevailing lighting conditions in the specified locale. The spell doesn't allow the use of infravision, nor may the wiz-

shady palm also blocks the sun's rays. Characters walking under the tree need not fear sun-blindness or sunburn.

Those creatures whose eyes are sensitive to sunlight receive an additional boon. When within the confines of the spell, drow, duergar, and others of their ilk can function as they would below ground. All penalties due to exposure to light are dropped.

Note that those within the spell's area of effect are not protected from heat-based spells of any sort, nor are they protected from natural heat sources. *Flame arrow*, *fireball*, *flame blade*, flaming swords, and burning oil cause normal damage.

The material component of this spell is a palm frond, which is consumed in the casting.

Hide Shadow

(Alteration/Necromancy)

Level: 3

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster to remove his or her own shadow or the shadow of another living creature, turning the shadow into a solid object that can be rolled up and concealed in any conventional hiding place.

A shadowless creature is immune to spells and magical items that detect or affect shadows (like *shadowpins* and *shadowstealers*, and the *shadow warrior*, *shadow replay*, and *shadow trap* spells). The spell's recipient can convincingly pretend to be a vampire and need not worry about casting a long shadow in well-lit dungeon corridors. When hiding around corners in brightly to dimly lit areas, the spell recipient applies a -2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls.

The finder of a hidden shadow can cast the above-mentioned spells on the shadow with their usual effects. Casting *continual light* on the hidden shadow inflicts 1 point of damage per round to the shadow's owner. A *light* spell causes 1 point of damage per turn, while non-magical light inflicts no damage. As a physical object, the shadow can be

There are several mundane uses for an *obedient shadow*, such as blocking sunlight or hiding an object from view.

chance to Hide in Shadows. Thieves receive a +20% modifier to their existing Hide in Shadows skill while in the area of effect.

At any time during the spell's duration, the caster can transform the *obedient shadow* into a 15'-radius sphere of impenetrable darkness identical to that created by the *darkness 15' radius* spell. Once this happens, the *obedient shadow* can no longer be controlled and remains "in place" until dispelled (via a *dispel magic* or *continual light* spell) or until the spell's duration expires.

The *obedient shadow* (in both its mobile or immobile form) can be destroyed by shadow creatures such as undead shadows or creatures affected by *shadow warrior* or *shadow trap* spells; an *obedient shadow* has AC 10, 1 hit point, and no special attacks or immunities.

Shadow Sight

(Divination)

Level: 2

Range: 30 feet/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

ard cast other spells or perform other actions while scrying with this spell.

Lead sheeting or proper magical protections around the specified locale can block a *shadow sight* spell.

The material component of this spell is a bead of black glass, which is consumed in the casting.

Shady Palm

(Alteration)

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 hour + 1/level

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 5' radius

Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, a shadowy palm tree appears. A magical pool of shade is created under its fronds. The tree reduces the effective temperature in the shaded area by 5 degrees per level of the caster, to a minimum of 70 degrees. The spell is centered on the target of the spell, which can be a person or an object. The *shady palm* moves with the target, making this spell ideal for desert traveling.

Those within the tree's shade are less likely to suffer from heat exhaustion while moving through hot environs. The

chopped up as if it were a piece of thin leather, but this causes no damage to the shadow's owner, as the pieces flow back into a seamless whole when the spell ends and the spell recipient's shadow is restored.

Shadow Weave

(Alteration)

Level: 3

Range: 30 feet

Duration: 1 round/level

Area of Effect: Special

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 3

Saving Throw: None

This spell enables the caster to form shadows into useful, semi-solid shapes. It requires the presence of a shadow no smaller than 100 square feet (in most cases, a 10' × 10' patch). This is the spell's only material component.

Upon casting the spell, the wizard temporarily reshapes the shadow into one of the following forms, which persists until the duration expires:

- ❖ A ladder with a maximum length equal to 4 feet per caster level. The exact length is determined by the wizard when the spell is cast.

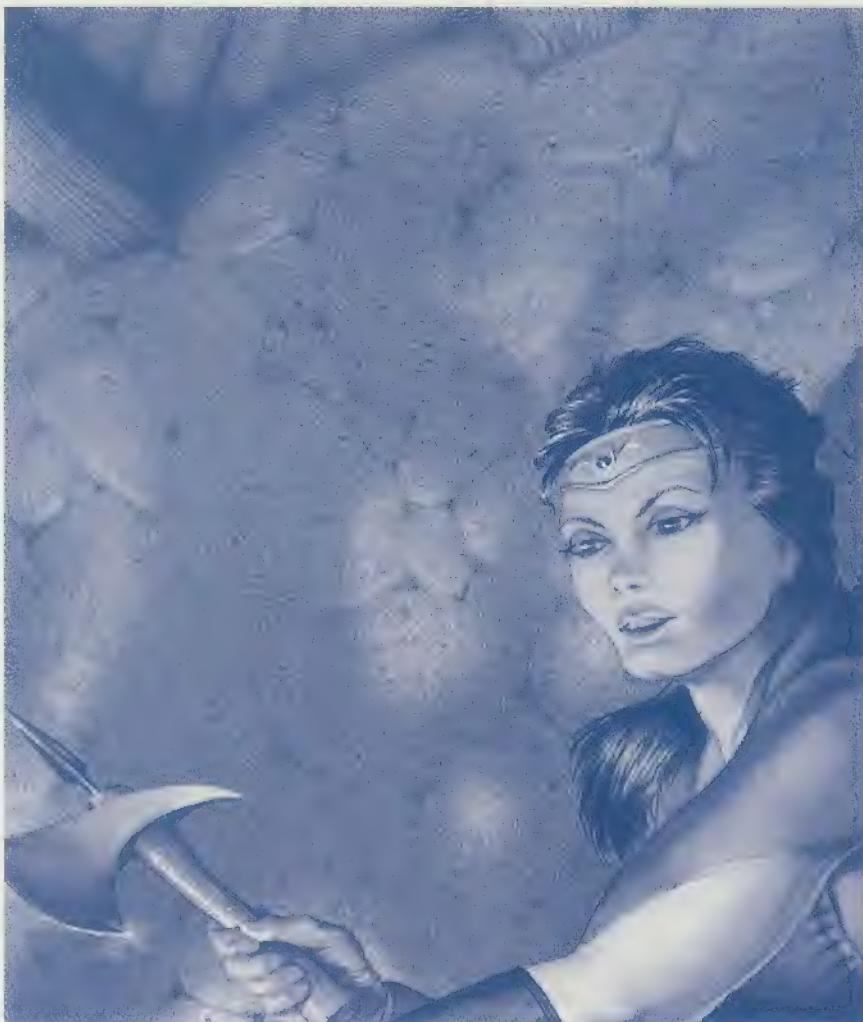
- ❖ A rope with a maximum length of 8 feet per caster level. The wizard determines the length of the rope at the time of casting and can create a three-pronged grapple hook at one end if desired. The rope supports up to 50 pounds per caster level.

- ❖ A net or blanket as large as the patch of shadow used for the spell. This net or blanket can be picked up, bundled, carried, and (if necessary) thrown.

- ❖ A cloak and cowl large enough to conceal the caster or another wearer of equal size. The cloak affords a 15% chance to Hide in Shadows or a +15% bonus to Hide in Shadows if the wearer is a rogue. The cloak can be worn over armor.

- ❖ A large sack that holds up to 10 cubic feet of material.

Regardless of its specified form, the item created by the *shadow weave* spell has negligible weight and encumbrance. The shadow-shaped object is "solid" for the duration of the spell, is treated as AC 10 for attack purposes, and can withstand 1 point of damage per caster level



before being dispelled. (Note that if the spell is used to weave a "shadow cloak," any attacks that strike at the wearer also damage the cloak.) A *light* spell cast directly upon a shadow-woven item inflicts 1 point of damage to the item per round; a *continual light* spell inflicts 3 points of damage to the item per round. A successful *dispel magic* negates the shadow-woven item entirely.

The caster can dispel the shadow-woven item at any time before the spell's duration expires, at which point the shadow returns to its point of origin.

Shadow Warrior

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 3

Range: 0

Duration: 1 turn + 2 rounds/level

Area of Effect: One shadow

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 3

Saving Throw: Special

This spell endows the shadow of its caster with a special ability: the power to cause physical harm to an opponent by attacking the opponent's shadow. No missile or spell attacks can be performed through the *shadow warrior*, but this spell still provides many benefits to the caster including increased attack range (if the dominant light source gives the caster an elongated shadow) and the ability to circumvent some of the victim's defenses. The caster's shadow must only strike his or her opponent's shadow to cause damage. In an attack, the opponent's armor and magical protection are ignored; only the opponent's Defensive Adjustment applies. For example: A wizard's *shadow warrior* attacks a thief with an 18 Dexterity wearing leather armor and a *ring of protection* +1, but only the thief's -4 Defense Adjustment (for high Dexterity) counts toward his AC. Thus, the *shadow warrior* must hit AC 6 to strike the thief's shadow and thus injure the thief.

The *shadow warrior* always strikes at the end of the round, as the wizard must be positioned correctly for the *shadow warrior* to reach the shadow of its intended target. While the spell is in effect, the wizard suffers a -2 penalty to his or her own attacks because of the counter-intuitive movements needed to make shadow-to-shadow contact. The *shadow warrior* suffers no such penalty.

Whatever weapon the caster carries in his or her hand are duplicated by the *shadow warrior*, and damage from a successful attack is calculated for the weapon used (with bare fists inflicting 1d2 points of damage). The wizard must still obey the normal weapon restrictions of his or her class. The effects of a magical weapon aren't duplicated, but the *shadow warrior*'s connection to the Demiplane of Shadow does allow the caster to fight shadow-to-shadow with the undead creature of that name, even without the benefit of a magical weapon. (The spell also allows the caster to harm slow shadows.)

The caster cannot be harmed through the *shadow warrior*, but attacks made on the *shadow warrior* eventually dispel the magic. The *shadow warrior* has 1 hit point per level of the caster and AC 10, modified by the caster's Defensive Adjustment. Engulfing the *shadow warrior* in darkness imposes a -4 penalty to its attack rolls, while surrounding the caster in light so that he or she casts no shadow dispels the *shadow warrior* immediately. The *shadow warrior* can be held at bay by carefully arranging light sources so that it isn't within striking range of another creature's shadow. Similarly, a clever caster uses carefully placed light sources to ensure that the *shadow warrior* can reach its intended targets.

The caster can improve his or her combat skill with the shadow by learning a new nonweapon proficiency, Shadow Boxing. This proficiency requires two slots, but no proficiency check is required to use the skill once obtained. The Shadow Boxing proficiency allows the caster's *shadow warrior* to attack as a warrior of the caster's level and further negates the caster's attack roll penalty during the rounds the *shadow warrior* is "active."

The caster can dispel the *shadow warrior* any time before the spell's expira-

tion. Because the *shadow warrior* is illusory, anyone who successfully disbelieves the illusion is impervious to the *shadow warrior*'s attacks.

Shadow Replay (Alteration/Divination)

Level: 4

Range: 0

Duration: 1 turn per level

Area of Effect: 20 square feet/level

Components: V,S

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: None

With this spell, the caster forces the shadows in the affected area to repeat their past movements in reverse order from the moment the spell is cast back to a time equal to 1 turn per caster level. Thus, a 10th-level wizard can replay the movements of shadows over the past 10 turns in a specified 200-square-foot area. The shadows replay their movements at normal speed (albeit backward), but the caster can order the shadows to move faster or slower by as much as a factor of ten. For example, the caster can have the shadows move back 10 rounds into the past in as little as 1 round or take as long as 10 rounds to display a single round of shadow activity. The caster can also "freeze" the shadows for as long as the spell's duration allows.

The caster can at any time command the shadows to show events in forward chronological order. For instance, if the mage sees a particular event of interest, he or she can move forward and back repeatedly over that time until the details become clear, keeping in mind the duration limits of the spell.

Interpreting motions of living people from the traces left behind by their shadows is difficult, and it requires a successful Wisdom check to identify a specific scene the caster is looking for or interpret particularly indistinct images (such as determining the nature of an object passed between two people when the only evidence is an image of one shadow handing another shadow the object in question).

The effects of the *shadow replay* spell are visible to anyone within range to see, not just the caster. The spell does nothing to suppress existing shadows, such as those cast by the caster or other creatures

and objects in the vicinity. For the spell to work, there must be a light source present, as the spell does not function in complete darkness.

Of course, if there were no shadows cast during any portion of the spell's backward time-replay, nothing of consequence is revealed to the caster.

Transport Via Shadow (Alteration)

Level: 5

Range: 0

Duration: Special

Area of Effect: Special

Components: V,S

Casting Time: 5

Saving Throw: None

This variation of the *dimension door* spell enables the caster and his carried possessions to "hop" from one shadow to another, entering one and emerging from another within range.

By means of this spell, the caster may enter any area of shadow large enough to cover him completely, pass through it to an extra-dimensional pocket in the Demiplane of Shadow, and emerge from another shadow in a single round, regardless of the distance separating the two. The destination need not be familiar to the mage; he or she can merely determine direction and distance and the *transport via shadow* spell moves him or her as close as possible to the desired location.

The points of entry and emergence must be large enough to conceal the caster's entire body. The caster cannot enter an area devoid of shadows (including areas of complete darkness) or any place containing shadows of insufficient size. Furthermore, the caster cannot view the destination until actually transported there. The *transport via shadow* is one-way; once the caster has completed one "crossing," the spell ends.

If there is no suitable shadow at the intended destination or if the caster decides not to emerge through the exit shadow, he or she can remain within the Demiplane of Shadow for up to 1 hour per level before being "expelled" through the exit shadow. If the intended exit shadow is too small, the caster is expelled through the nearest shadow of sufficient size.

This spell cannot be used to transport anyone other than the caster, nor can it be used to transport the caster to another plane of existence other than the Demiplane of Shadow (as outlined above).

Death Shade

(Necromancy)

Level: 7

Range: 0

Duration: See below

Area of Effect: See below

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 7

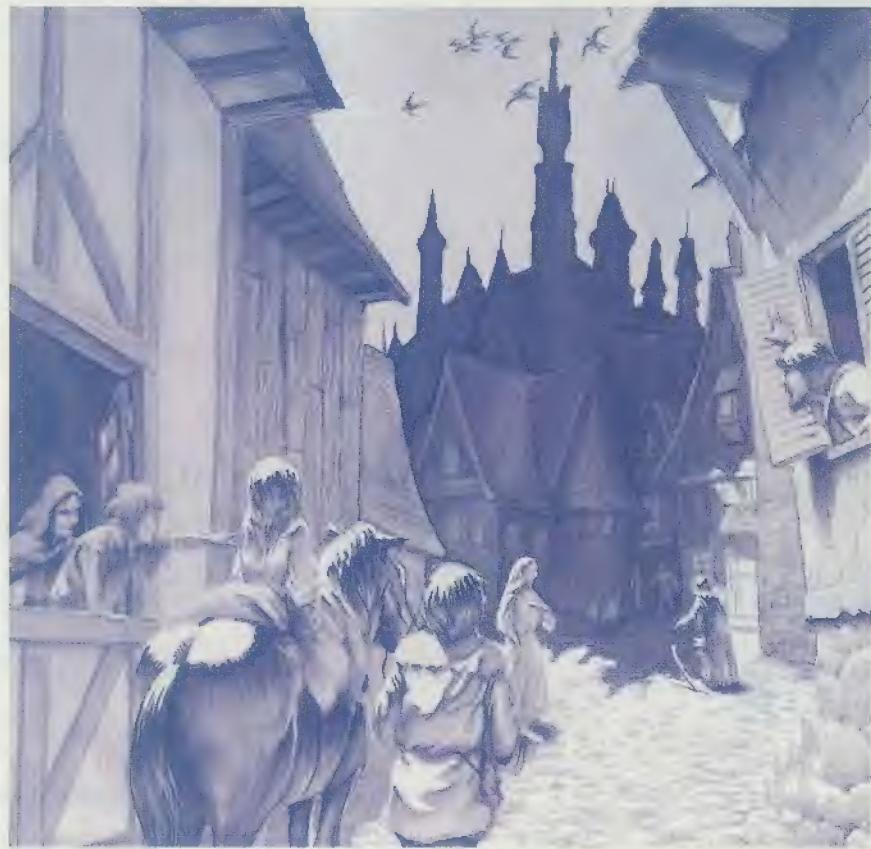
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell creates a shadowy pall that extends from the caster at a rate of 1 mile per round until it reaches its maximum area of effect of 1 mile per caster level. The pall also darkens everything up to one mile above the area of effect. However, it does not extend underground.

Anyone caught in shadowy shroud must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic. Only humans, demihumans, and humanoids (including giants) are affected by the *death shade* spell; plants, animals, undead, golems, and nonhumanoid monsters are unharmed. Susceptible beings who fail the saving throw feel a cold chill and suffer 1 point of damage. This damage, while minor, cannot be restored except with a *heal* or *restoration* spell. The damage is not cumulative with prolonged exposure to the deadly pall, which dissipates the round after the spell attains its maximum radius of effect.

The *death shade* can be seen as it approaches, but it travels too quickly to be outdistanced or evaded on foot. Only creatures with movement rates of 15 or better can outdistance the spell. Buildings and other above-ground shelters afford no protection, although the spell cannot penetrate a *globe of invulnerability* or *anti-magic shell*.

The spell can be cast as often as desired, but the caster must make a successful System Shock roll or lose 1d4 points of Constitution immediately after the casting. Lost points may be recovered only by casting *restoration* spells (one spell per point recovered).



Shadow Trap

(Alteration)

Level: 7

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: One person

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 7

Saving Throw: Negates

The somatic component of this spell is a shove by the caster, pushing the victim toward his or her own shadow. If the spell is cast successfully (requiring both a successful attack roll by the caster and a failed saving throw on the part of the victim), the intended victim is immediately sucked into his or her own shadow. The victim no longer exists except as a shadow moving along surfaces. The victim can still sense the outside world, however, he or she cannot communicate with anyone or directly affect the surroundings while in shadow form. The victim cannot cast spells, attack, or move anywhere that a shadow would not normally be able to go, such as across a flat, shadeless desert. The shadow is also incapable of moving into a "dead magic" zone or an area protected by a *globe of invulnerability* or *anti-magic shell*.

Normal light sources directed at the shadow cause it to dim appropriately but inflict no harm to the victim. Magical light causes 1d4 points of damage per round. Only a *true seeing* or *divination* spell reveals the victim's true fate. *Remove curse*, *dispel magic*, and *limited wish* can free a *shadow-trapped* victim. Using magical light to reduce the victim to 0 hit points also causes the spell to be broken, although this method causes the dead body to fall out of the now-normal shadow.

Victims of a *shadow trap* can fight shadows, slow shadows, or anyone under the effect of the *shadow warrior* spell as if they were *shadow warriors*, but victims are not able to affect the shadows of normal, corporeal creatures.



Spike Y. Jones wrote his first articles for British fanzines in 1983, and sold his first handful of monsters to DRAGON® Magazine in 1986. He still keeps coming back with new spells, magical items, and monsters for DRAGON Magazine.

THE ECOLOGY OF THE DARK NAGA

Fool Me Twice

Never send
a wizard to do
a rat's job.

by
Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by
Brad McDevitt

THIS FIELD SESSION OF THE MONSTER HUNTERS Association is hereby opened," whispered Dreelix. To everyone's amusement, he pantomimed banging three times with an imaginary gavel in the air in front of him as he said it.

"You all know why we're here," Dreelix continued in a low whisper, casting a quick glance over his shoulder at the narrow, dark hole in the side of the hill. "Does everyone know what they're to do?"

"I can hear you out there, you know,"¹ called a voice from the hole.

Dreelix ignored him. "Buntleby, are you ready with that cloudkill spell?" he whispered.

"Certainly," replied Buntleby in a normal tone of voice. "But you realize that it'll probably have no effect on the creature."

"Shhh! Keep your voice down!"

"Why? It can obviously hear us."

"I can hear you just fine!" confirmed the naga from the hole. "But please, do carry on. Just ignore me. Pretend I'm not here—oh! But that would defeat the purpose, wouldn't it?"

"Go on, then," urged Dreelix.

Buntleby approached the naga's hole and hesitated. "I feel funny doing this, knowing that he knows what I'm doing," he said.

"Don't mind me," chirped the naga's voice. "It's OK—I don't mind being chased into a deep, dark hole by a bunch of crazed humans with some hair-brained scheme of cutting me up and turning me into a bunch of magical paraphernalia²—really, I don't mind at all."

"Sarcastic little begger," muttered Zantoullios.

"Still, I feel like a creep," said Buntleby.

"Go ahead," said Willowquisp. "I don't think it's going to work, anyway. As far as I know, dark nagas are immune to all

1. While a dark naga has no external ears, it does have a limited sense of hearing. Its snakelike body conducts ground vibrations to the inner ear via the bones of its skull, so a dark naga can "hear" footfalls approaching it, but air-transmitted sounds (like voices) are much more difficult for a dark naga to pick up.

To compensate, dark nagas have an inherent, continuous *ESP* ability that allows them to pick up the surface thoughts of anyone within 80 feet. This ability allows them to "hear" spoken words mentally (since the words are in the speaker's mind as he says them), although it doesn't allow them to "hear" a finger-snap, belch, hiccup, or other nonverbal sounds not transmitted through the ground. A dark naga can "hear" everything being spoken aloud within the 80' range of its *ESP* power, although it can

only concentrate on one voice at a time if more than one person is talking.

Oddly enough, the dark naga's *ESP* power makes it immune to attempts at mind-reading. This includes spells, magical items, and psionics.

2. The cranial portions of dark naga skulls are often used to craft *medallions of ESP* or *amulets of proof against detection and location*. The rubbery, bag-like organs in their gullets (see note 18) are sometimes used in the manufacture of *bags of holding*. Dark naga blood is one of several possible types of blood used to empower a *periapt of proof against poison* and is also employed in the creation of *potions of ESP* and *oil of acid resistance*. Finally, the dark naga's hide itself is sought for its unusual color, and the poison sac near the creature's tail spike can be siphoned to harvest a single dose of sleep venom.

poisons; I don't see why your cloudkill spell should be any different."³

"OK, then, stand back everyone," Buntleby warned. As he intoned the arcane words and performed the intricate finger-gestures necessary to trigger the spell, a cloud of ghastly green vapors began to form like fog from the ground. At a gesture from the young wizard, the noxious cloud billowed into the naga's hole and sank below the earth.

"Say, this isn't so bad," came the naga's voice. "In fact, I wouldn't—Gack! Aagh! It BURNS! GODS, HOW IT BURNS!"

Buntleby, horrorstruck, put his hands to his face at the sounds of the naga's pitiable cries. "What have I done?" he cried, as the naga's torturous screams became more and more pain-ridden. "I didn't mean for him to suffer like this!"

"MAKE IT STOP! MAKE IT STOP!" screamed the naga. Buntleby staggered back in horror; Willowquisp grabbed him by the shoulders and led him back from the creature's hole. Ozzie, Buntleby's faithful osquip familiar, trotted to his master's feet and licked his ankles in sympathy with a raspy tongue. "There, there," comforted the elderly sage. "I'm surprised that it worked, but this should all be over with soon."

"THE PAIN! OH, THE UNHOLY PAIN!" The Monster Hunters all looked at each other guiltily. Grindle the Coin-Counter, all three hundred pounds of him, looked about to burst into tears. Lady Ablasta held a perfumed handkerchief to her face and looked away. Even Dreelix, who cared only for the money to be made from the magical items fashioned by the strange creatures his association hunted down and slew, looked a little green. And still the naga's tortured cries emanated from the hole.

"THE INHUMANITY! TO BE SLAIN IN SUCH A CRUEL FASHION! ALL FOR GREED—FOR THE

3. Dark nagas are immune not only to all normal and magical venoms and poisons, but also to all acids. In fact, many dark nagas habitually drink a vial of poison and then spit it out at opponents later in battle. Such poison-spitting attacks have a range of 10 feet; optionally, the naga can hold the poison in its mouth and add the poison effects to its normal bite damage of 1d4 hp. While far less common, a dark naga can also spit acid in a similar fashion.

4. Actually, like most snakes, nagas are able to go without breathing for some time. The standard sequence is: breathe out, breathe in, pause without breathing for awhile. The pause without breath is called *apnea*, and its duration depends upon the naga's activity. A resting and undisturbed naga can go without breathing for several minutes; during



"I can hear you out there, you know," called a voice from the hole.

SIMPLE LOVE OF MONEY! OH, WOE IS ME! THE PAIN—THE UNENDURABLE PAIN! NEVER HAVE I KNOWN SUCH AGONY! NEVER HAVE I SUFFERED SO! MY SCALES BURN LIKE HOT COALS! MY THROAT BLISTERS AND CHARS FROM WITHIN!"

"Hey, wait a minute," said Zantoullos, scowling.

"THESE POISONOUS FUMES! EACH GASP OF BREATH IS UNBEARABLE PAIN!⁴ EACH BEAT OF MY HEART SENDS THE POISON DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO MY PAIN-WRACKED BODY! OH, THE HORROR! THE HORROR!"

"He's sure got plenty of breath for somebody choking to death," observed the gangly wizard, hands on his hips. "What do you think, Dreelix?"

Dreelix wiped surreptitiously at a tear in his eye, then scowled back at Zantoullos. "He's faking!" he agreed.

"THE TERRIBLE, GUT-WRENCHING TORMENT! THE DREADFUL, MIND-NUMBING HORROR! THE AGONIZING, PANIC-INDUCING—"

"Oh, shut up down there!" Dreelix yelled. "We're on to your tricks!"

hibernation, the naga can actually go without breathing for several months at a time. (Cutaneous respiration—the exchange of gas through the creature's skin—provides the naga with enough oxygen and also disperses the buildup of carbon dioxide during these motionless periods.)

5. Given a choice, a dark naga would live a strictly carnivorous diet—they are especially fond of hot, fresh blood. However, being practical, they supplement their diet when necessary with lichen and the occasional green plant when prey is scarce.

6. The dark naga must swallow its prey whole, since it lacks the teeth necessary for chewing. (Its fangs are used only to stab prey and hold it in the naga's mouth.) Even though the dark naga has a human-like head, its lower jaw is hinged like that of

"Righty-ho," agreed the naga in a cheery voice. "What's next then?"

"Okay, so that didn't work," said Dreelix. "Let's move on to Plan B: Grindle, do you have the hook and bait?"

Grindle shrugged off his pack and removed a sturdy rope, to the end of which was attached a metal grappling hook. Rummaging through the pack, Grindle pulled out a roast chicken and stuck it onto the hook, careful all the while to keep the side where he had already taken a few nibbles hidden from view. "Okay," he said finally.

"This isn't going to work," lamented Willowquisp, shaking his head sadly. "This is an even dumber idea than the poison cloud."

"You were the one who said it was a carnivore,"⁵ hissed Dreelix. "Plus, you said it had to swallow its food whole.⁶ This'll work. Just give it a chance. Go ahead, Grindle."

Grindle walked up to the hole and paid out the rope, sending the roast

a snake, allowing the creature to swallow prey larger around than itself. For the same reason, its ribs are flexible, and its scales can stretch to accommodate swallowed prey. An adult dark naga can swallow a victim of up to size M, although the prey must already be dead (or at least paralyzed with sleep venom) before the naga attempts to devour it—the creature cannot swallow prey in combat.

The easiest creature for a naga to swallow is a snake or snakelike creature. Being narrow in build and limbless, such creatures slide effortlessly into a naga's gullet. A dark naga will not eat another dark naga, but all other creatures, dead or alive (including other types of nagas) are fair game. The dark naga's immunity to venom makes even poisonous snakes easy prey.

chicken plummeting down to the naga. "Oh no!" he cried out in mock anguish.

"What's wrong, Grindle?" asked Dreelix on cue, bending close to the hole to make sure the naga would be able to hear him.

"My chicken! I dropped it, and it fell down the naga's hole! That was going to be my lunch!"

"This is embarrassing," muttered Buntleby to Willowquisp. The sage

hand, the flab under his arms jiggling with each movement. Zantoullios gripped the end of his staff tightly, ready to bonk the naga over the head as soon as it appeared.

Sure enough, a human-sized head and snake-like body popped up out of the hole, attached to the end of Grindle's line. However, while the Monster Hunters expected the creature to be covered in dark scales,⁷ this one was white—

its open mouth, striking the gangly wizard and bowling him over backward with a howl of surprise and pain.

Buntleby pushed Willowquisp back out of the way, knowing that the elderly sage was of little use and in considerable danger in a battle. Grindle, meanwhile, dropped his rope and rushed to close with the creature. It got in a couple of jabs with its tail spike, but the heavyset wizard managed to crush the bone naga's skull between his powerful hands, and the thing fell to the ground in pieces, each bone falling apart from the others. Winded, Grindle wiped his forehead with the back of one hand, shuffled over to the end of the rope, and retrieved his roast chicken. Brushing the dirt from it, he helped himself to a massive bite.

"Hey, bone nagas don't come cheap!" whined the dark naga petulantly from its hole. "I spent a lot of time on that one!"⁸

"Good work," said Dreelix, clapping Grindle on the shoulder.

Buntleby helped Zantoullios to his feet. "I'm fine, I'm fine," grumbled the gangly wizard, brushing off the dirt from his robes.

"Now what?" asked Willowquisp.

"We've got to get him out of there, out into the open," said Dreelix, fuming. "If we could just get within visual range of

shook his head in agreement.

"Hey, what's this?" came the naga's voice from the hole. "Why, it looks like free food! Thanks up there!" There was a short pause, then the creature called up, "Hey, this is pretty good!"

"He fell for it!" cried Dreelix, wringing his hands together in anticipation. "Quick, pull him up!"

"He can't have fallen for it," reasoned Buntleby. "How could he talk to us if he had a roast chicken in his mouth?"

"No, I've got him—I can feel it!" cried Grindle, pulling the rope up hand over

bone white. As more of the creature was pulled out into the open, the reason for this became apparent: it wasn't a dark naga after all, but merely an animated skeleton.⁹

While the Monster Hunters stood motionless in shock, the creature opened its jaws wide and spit out the chicken impaled on Grindle's grappling hook. As if on cue, Zantoullios brought his staff crashing down upon the bone naga's skull, but it merely shrugged off the blow and attacked. Twin magic missiles shot out of its eyes and one bolted from

7. Coloration varies among dark nagas: Most are either black or a deep, purplish-black, although there a few whose scales are a very dark blue. A dark naga's scales are so small as to be almost invisible to the naked eye, giving the creature a smooth, eel-like appearance (which is further enhanced by a crest along the top of the naga's head and back; this crest is the same color as the naga's scales). Regardless of scale color, the dark naga's eyes are yellow and glow eerily in low light.

8. The bone naga is an odd form of undead, created from the bones of a dark naga. Created by dark nagas (and some evil mages) as guardians, these fell creatures serve their masters with absolute loyalty, communicating with them silently through a limited form of telepathy (60' range).

The similarities between bone nagas and dark nagas are many: both attack twice each round, inflicting 1d4 points of damage with their fangs and 2d4 points of damage with their barbed tail spike. However, the bone naga's bite also temporarily drains 1 point of Strength. In addition, while a dark naga's tail spike requires victims to make a successful saving throw vs. poison or suffer an additional 1-2 points of damage and fall into a drugged sleep for 2d4 rounds, the bone naga's tail spike instead automatically (no saving throw) causes 1d4 points of chilling damage (bringing its tail spike damage total to 3d4).

Both creatures cast spells as a 6th-level wizard (4/2/2), although a bone naga's spells are fixed when first created, cast by silent force of will (no verbal, somatic, or material components required), and return unbidden to the bone naga's mind 20 hours after use. Typical spells include *magic missile*, *blindness*, *flaming sphere*, and *lightning bolt*.

Bone nagas share the dark naga's immunity to all acids and poisons, plus have the standard undead immunities to *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, death magic, and cold-based attacks. Further details on the bone naga are available in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual Volume One*.

Because of their similar appearance (basically a human skull on a snake's skeleton) it is easy to mistake a bone naga for a necrophidius, or death worm (see the *MONSTROUS MANUAL®*, page 170). Closer examination shows the necrophidius lacks the bone naga's tail spike and has a solid lower jaw (unlike the bone naga, which shares the dark naga's two-piece, detachable lower jaw). It should be noted that a naga drinking a *skeletal potion* could easily pass itself for either creature.

9. The process of creating a bone naga is long and exacting. At its heart is a specialized magical ritual known only to dark nagas and a few evil wizards.

The ritual requires the full skeleton of a dark naga personally known by the spellcaster (dark nagas often animate their slain comrades as bone nagas; this practice often creates distrust among dark nagas living and working together, as each one must worry about which of its "friends" is really harboring ulterior plans). The dead naga's body is arranged in a circle with the tip of its tail spike inside its own mouth, and the living naga crawls inside the circle thus formed. The living naga must chant a litany of arcane words over the dead one as its flesh decomposes naturally; this process can take many weeks, during which time the naga must not leave the circle formed by rotting naga's body. Once the skeleton has been stripped clean of all flesh, the rest of the ritual is completed, during which time the bone naga's spell arsenal is chosen and implanted. (Obviously,

the spells must be known by the dark naga performing the ritual.) Finally, the bone naga is brought to unholy life by a temporary (and voluntary) draining of one-half of the dark naga's hit points; the dark naga can only heal this damage over time, at the rate of 1 hit point per day of rest. Because of the toll the animation of bone naga places on the dark naga, bone nagas remain a rare commodity.

10. Not necessarily: A dark naga receives a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, and similar Enchantment/Charm spells. This bonus is due in part to the creature's exceptional Intelligence rating (16 is standard for the race).

11. Dark nagas give live birth to a squirming mass of 11-20 (1d10+10) young, which are immediately abandoned and left to survive on their own. While sharing the standard dark naga coloration, they otherwise appear to be foot-long worms—their human-like heads and barbed tail spikes don't develop until after their first molt. In the meantime, the immature nagas subsist on a diet of lichens, fungus, and molds.

After shedding their skin for the first time (a process known as *ecdysis*), the dark nagas develop their innate *ESP* powers and learn the languages of intelligent creatures around them. They continue to molt on an irregular basis (based upon their food intake—the more they eat, the larger they grow, until eventually they get "too big for their skin"), adding 6 inches or so with each molt until they reach their full size. The largest dark naga ever recorded was a full 12 feet long.

Because of their low metabolism, nagas can survive without food for extended periods of time. Therefore, when encountered in any numbers, the largest naga isn't necessarily the oldest, merely the most well fed.

Twin magic missiles shot out of its eyes and one bolted from its open mouth, striking the gangly wizard and bowling him over backward.

shook his head in agreement.

"Hey, what's this?" came the naga's voice from the hole. "Why, it looks like free food! Thanks up there!" There was a short pause, then the creature called up, "Hey, this is pretty good!"

"He fell for it!" cried Dreelix, wringing his hands together in anticipation. "Quick, pull him up!"

"He can't have fallen for it," reasoned Buntleby. "How could he talk to us if he had a roast chicken in his mouth?"

"No, I've got him—I can feel it!" cried Grindle, pulling the rope up hand over

the thing, one simple charm monster spell, and we'd be home free!"¹⁰

"Why don't you just come down here and get me?" taunted the naga from its hole. "Well, some of you, anyway—Grindle's obviously way too fat!" Grindle looked up from his chicken, shrugged, and returned to his meal.

"How about you, then, Willowquisp? Care to crawl on down here? You could learn all sorts of fascinating things about dark naga development!"—you'd like that, wouldn't you? Just think of the knowledge you could add to that notebook of yours. No? Then how about you, Zantoullios? You're thin enough to squeeze down my bolt-hole.¹² No? Well, how about you then, Ablastia? You should be able to fit that scrawny chicken-body of yours down here. Come on, my dear. Apparently none of the others are man enough!"

"Well, I never!" huffed the conjurer Ablastia, eyes blazing and nostrils flared.

"That might not be such a bad idea," whispered Dreelix.

"What do you mean—crawl down there with him?" asked Buntleby. "That doesn't seem wise."

"We could lure him, catch him off his guard."

"How?"

"Well, you and Grindle both know polymorph self, right? One of you polymorphs into a female dark naga, and, you know, makes nice."

"Great plan!" called the naga from the pit.

"Absolutely not!" cried Buntleby.

"It wouldn't work anyway," said Willowquisp. "There are no female dark nagas. No male ones either, for that matter."¹³

"Then how do they...?" asked Dreelix.

12. Dark nagas prefer to lair in rocky places like caverns and ruins with multiple exits. At least one exit will be narrow enough for the naga to block with its body to fight off intruders. However, they don't like their tunnels to be too narrow, for the creatures are unable to crawl backward. They crawl through narrow tunnels using *rectilinear creeping* (pulling themselves forward by the edges of their belly scales); thus, to move backward in a tunnel, they must turn the front half of their body around and move head-first in the opposite direction.

Dark nagas are fond of traps, and their lairs often have numerous traps ready to be sprung upon the unwary. These traps are most often designed by the nagas but built by other races (orcs, hobgoblins, etc.)



Dark nagas prefer to lair in rocky places like caverns and ruins with multiple exits.

"Quit messing around up there, and send me a partner!" called the naga.

"SHUT UP!" cried Buntleby and Dreelix in unison. The naga just chuckled.

Willowquisp pursed his lips in thought and walked away from the others, motioning for the others to follow him.

"Had enough?" called the naga. "Giving up so soon?" The Monster Hunters ignored it and kept walking.

"What's up?" asked Zantoullios, after they had formed into a huddle a good hundred feet away from the naga's hole.

"Did you notice how it calls us by

name?" asked the sage.

"So what?" asked Dreelix, irritably. "The thing's got good ears."

"That's what I thought at first, too, but I don't think we've said Lady Ablastia's name aloud since we came here."

"Your point?"

"I think the thing's been reading our minds."

"What? Why didn't you mention this at the beginning?" demanded Dreelix.

"For a simple reason: I didn't know."

"How is it that you know all about their sexual makeup but know nothing about their mental abilities?"

in exchange for services from the naga (usually casting spells).

13. Dark nagas are hermaphroditic, having both male and female reproductive organs. When mating, both nagas end up pregnant, giving birth 5–6 months after mating. Dark nagas usually mate once a year, in the late fall, giving birth in the springtime.

14. Several spells and magical items are of great use when combating a dark naga. For obvious reasons, the *mind blank* spell, an *amulet of proof against detection and location*, a *ring of mind shielding*, or similar magic is indispensable, preventing the dark naga from being able to read the user's mind. Since the naga's *ESP* is its most powerful sense, depriving its use greatly hampers the naga's ability to target ene-

mies. (The naga has only short-range visual acuity.) Regardless of level, a mentally unshielded thief has virtually no chance of sneaking up on a dark naga; remove the naga's use of *ESP* and not only does moving silently around a naga become feasible, but the thief enjoys a +10% bonus to his *Move Silently* and *Hide in Shadows* die rolls.

Since dark nagas are reptilian, all reptile-specific magical items (*potions of reptile control*, *sword +1/+4 vs. reptiles*, *arrows of reptile slaying*) can be used at maximum efficacy against them. It should be noted that while nagas are not snakes, they are nonetheless subject to the effects of a *snake charm* spell (although they still receive a +2 to their saving throw). They are not affected by the *snakes to sticks* spell, however.

"Because their sexual makeup is quite obvious on the dissection table, while their mental abilities are not!" fumed the sage, angered at Dreelix's tone of voice. "I've only seen one of these things before, and that was years ago!"

"Let's all settle down," suggested Buntleby. "So the thing can read our minds: What can we do about it?"

"Hello?" called the naga's voice from the distance. "Anybody there?"

"What we need is a mind blank spell," suggested Zantoullios.¹⁴ "I think I might have one, on a scroll."

"Here?"

"No, back at the lab."

"Well, forget it then," said Buntleby. He knew full well the state of the converted barn Zantoullios used as a laboratory—it would take the wizard the better part of a week to find anything in that mess of notes, papers, and half-finished experiments. "We need to see what the naga's hole is like. Lady Ablasta—do you have a wizard eye spell available?"

"As it happens, yes." Buntleby had been certain she would; Lady Ablasta took the stereotypical "nosy old lady" image to new magical heights. Her neighbors kept few secrets from her magical snooping—not that she'd admit to anything, mind you.

"Then, if you don't mind, cast it here, out of range, and send it on down the hole." Buntleby helped the conjurer to the ground, where she sat ramrod straight, skirts tucked beneath her, and prepared the spell.

15. Like all snakes, the dark naga has no eyelids. Instead, it has developed transparent scales that completely cover its eyes, protecting them from dirt and grit. As a result, the naga is unable to close its eyes, and they remain open and staring even when the creature sleeps.

16. Like a snake, the dark naga has an organ (called the *Jacobson's organ* or *vomeronasal organ*) on the roof of its mouth with which it identifies scents. The forked tongue flickers out, captures molecules of scent, and transfers them to the organ for identification. This process goes on constantly and allows the naga to track prey by their scent-trails.

17. Dark nagas hibernate during the winter months in underground burrows, or *hibernaculi*. The available number of such winter dens determines how many nagas one might find in each hibernaculum—in areas where such holes are uncommon, a greater number of dark nagas than are normally found together will be present. Once warmer weather returns in the springtime, the dark nagas each go their separate ways.

18. Lacking hands, a dark naga's treasure tends to be those things that it can actually use. Coins and gems are hoarded to pay humanoid races for services the naga is unable to perform itself (like digging

"I'm getting bored down here!" cried the naga. "You guys still there, or what?"

"What are you thinking?" Dreelix asked Buntleby.

"You're right: Since we can't seem to get the naga to come out here, it may be necessary for one of us to go in there."

"How? By crawling?"

"I've got a teleport spell memorized. If there's enough room down there, I might be able to pop in, throw a charm monster at it, and convince it to crawl out into the open."

After a few minutes of preparation, Lady Ablasta announced: "I'm ready."

"Send it down, then, and tell us what you see."

The Monster Hunters all gathered around their sole female member, listening to her every word. "I'm at the entrance of the pit," she said, eyes closed, concentrating on the invisible eye she had called forth. "I'm going down: ten, fifteen feet. Oh! There's the nasty critter right there, looking right at me!"¹⁵ Well! It's sticking its tongue out at me!¹⁶

"Can it see you, do you think?" asked Willowquisp.

"I'm not—no, I don't think so."

"What do see around you?" asked Buntleby. "How big is the chamber?"

"Not very. It's roughly circular, maybe fifteen or twenty feet across.¹⁷ There's a small pile of coins along one side, and something sticking up out of them. No, several somethings."

"Take a closer look if you would, please."

"Flasks. They're glass vials."

"Potions," said Willowquisp. "That makes sense."¹⁸

"How tall is the ceiling?" asked Buntleby. "Would I have room to stand?"

"It's hard to say," said Lady Ablasta. "Maybe if you stood hunched over."

"Anything else in there that you can see?"

"No, I don't think so."

"What about the naga itself? Anything else I should know?"

"No, it's just sitting there. Wait—there's something on the end of its tail. Goodness, it's a ring!"

"Magical, do you think?" asked Willowquisp.

"I have no way of telling."¹⁹

"Okay, I think that's all we can learn this way. Thank you, Lady Ablasta."

"Are you going to do it, Buntleby? Teleport in?" asked Willowquisp.

"It seems like our best bet."

"What should the rest of us do?"

"Stay here. I don't want you getting too close, or it'll read your minds and learn about the plan."

"Makes sense," agreed Dreelix, always willing to stay out of danger whenever possible.

"Okay, then," said Buntleby, crouching over and mentally preparing himself for the teleport. "Wish me luck."

A few magical words and gestures, and the young wizard popped out of view. Almost immediately, he found himself in a dim cavern, standing in a

ging pit traps). Potions and scrolls are common items in a dark naga's treasure hold, as the creature can use each of these items easily. (They usually prop up potion flasks with coins or rocks, and have the cork stoppers on loose enough to enable quick opening with their mouths.) Scrolls are usually unrolled and held open with a small stone in each corner, allowing the naga to cast the scroll spells quickly. Dark nagas also collect spellbooks, turning the pages with their tail spikes or tongues.

When transporting its treasure from one location to another, the dark naga swallows the items and shifts them to a rubbery, baglike organ attached to one side of the creature's esophagus. This organ is thick and resilient enough to resist being punctured by sharp objects (the dark naga can therefore swallow daggers, knives, and other bladed weapons), and has an added bonus: The organ shields magic from all detection spells.

19. Dark nagas occasionally wear a ring or two on their tail spikes. This is done merely for ornamentation; lacking fingers, nagas cannot use magical rings. However, there are a few types of worn magical items that nagas can employ, among them hats, caps, and helms. For obvious reasons, they cannot wear magical eyes, capes, cloaks, robes, girdles, gauntlets,

gloves, boots, slippers, or shoes. It might be possible for a naga to wear a magical brooch, amulet, or medallion, if some way of attaching it could be contrived (pinning it to a worn hat, perhaps).

20. All of a dark naga's spells require verbal components only; besides the verbal-only spells listed in the *Player's Handbook* (*feather fall*, *hold portal*, *blindness, knock*) and *Tome of Magic* (*Hornung's guess, far reaching I, minor maledict*), nagas learn verbal-only spells from evil dragons, phaerim, or other creatures able to cast act-of-will spells. The naga can also devise new spells and learn to modify standard spells to verbal-only versions, but such experimentation is both slow and expensive. It generally prefers to work for an evil, spell-using creature, receiving spells as its pay.

A dark naga in the employ of another creature usually serves as an overseer of the lower servants: It might be a black dragon's chief lieutenant in charge of keeping the lizard man minions in line, or slither into battle with a band of orcs, serving as the magical strike force commander. In the *RAVENLOFT* campaign, dark nagas are most often found in the service of a hebi-no-onna (see the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM RAVENLOFT Appendix III: Creatures of Darkness*, page 55).

loose pile of coins. The dark naga was directly in front of him, its head turned away, looking toward the nearly vertical tunnel to the surface.

Buntleby began the words of the charm monster spell. Halfway through, the creature spun around, stared the wizard straight in the eye, and began the words of a spell of its own.²⁰

Both spells finished about the same time. Before Buntleby could see if his spell worked, the world went gray, as if a deep mist had covered his eyes. Blindness spell! he realized. "Stay where you are!" he commanded.

"I live to obey, master," responded the naga; Buntleby breathed a sigh of relief. He was therefore taken completely by surprise when the creature's tail spike jabbed him in the side of the leg. "Fooled you!" the evil serpent chuckled in glee.

Buntleby tried to come up with the words to an appropriate spell, but his thoughts were getting sluggish, and it was hard to concentrate. Magic missile? No, he'd have to see to target it. Dispel magic on the blindness then? That sounded right. But how did that spell go again?

Buntleby crashed to the floor of the cavern, snoring loudly. The naga cast its ESP senses quickly around: None of the other humans were within range. "Dinner time," it said. "Thank you, Dark One, for this bounty which so foolishly delivered itself to me."²¹

Running its forked tongue across its finely scaled lips in anticipation, the naga unhinged its jaws and maneuvered them over Buntleby's head. Shifting back and forth and side to side, the creature managed to work its jaws past the young wizard's shoulders when the cavalry arrived quite unexpectedly.

A small clattering of pebbles falling down the entrance hole was the only

21. There are two main gods in the naga pantheon: Shekinester of the Triple Aspects, and her son, Parrafaire, the guardian of magical secrets and hidden places deep below the ground. Parrafaire has no formal worshippers; Shekinester, as the creator of the "true" nagas, is thus worshiped by lawful good guardian nagas, neutral water nagas, and chaotic evil spirit nagas alike.

The lawful evil dark nagas, however, are not "true" nagas—they are believed by some to be a mutant strain of spirit naga, possibly the result of wild magic. (The fact that dark nagas are hermaphroditic while "true" nagas have two distinct sexes is the greatest argument against their being a form of



Ozzie just chuffed and returned to his snack.

warning before Ozzie came flying out of the shaft, to land squarely on the naga's back. The naga had been concentrating on its meal and scanning only for nearby human thought with its ESP powers; Ozzie's animal thoughts snuck right past its awareness.

With its mouth extended over Buntleby's prone form, both the naga's fangs and its spells were inaccessible for combat. That left only its tail, which it swung wildly in an attempt to pierce the six-limbed creature that hung onto the back of its neck.

Ozzie wasn't in much danger, though. The naga couldn't see the osquip from its prone position and had no way of extricating Buntleby now that he had passed beyond its mouth.²² A few bites to the back of the head with teeth that could eat through solid stone, and the dark naga was no more.

Several minutes later, Zantoullios wriggled his skinny body headfirst down the naga's entrance tunnel and landed in a heap. There he found an

amazing sight: Buntleby's lower half projecting from the dead naga's mouth, and Ozzie nibbling contentedly on a pile of stone pebbles by his master's feet. Buntleby's snores echoed strangely from deep inside the slain creature's throat.

"Is he okay?" came Willowquisp's worried voice from above.

"He's fine," called Zantoullios, as he bent over to pat the top of Ozzie's leathery head. "Who's a good boy then, Ozzie?" he asked.

Ozzie just chuffed and returned to his snack.



Oddly enough, in Johnathan M. Richards' home campaign, many of the monsters and NPCs his players encounter are as sarcastic as the dark naga portrayed in the story above. Johnathan claims this is mere coincidence.

"true" naga.) In any case, dark nagas rarely worship the naga gods, preferring "generic" evil gods such as the Elder Elemental God or the Dark God. Those dark nagas serving closely with powerful creatures like beholders or dragons often adopt their leader's faith. Regardless of the god or gods they choose to revere, dark nagas never become priests or gain priest spells.

Details on the gods mentioned above can be found in *Monster Mythology*.

22. Like snakes, a dark naga's teeth point backward down its throat, preventing struggling prey from escaping once the naga bites down on it. Once the prey is dead (or immobilized), the naga works

the body down its throat with a back-and-forth ratcheting motion, shifting one side of its hinged jaw further down the prey's body, then repeating the process with the other side, and so on. Because of the angle of the naga's teeth, once a body has made it past the naga's throat, there's no way for it to "spit" the body out; it must continue the process until the prey has been completely swallowed.

Once it has devoured its prey, the naga takes up to a week to digest it. Elevated body temperatures can speed up the digestion process, so a dark naga may seek to bask in the sun after eating a large meal.

1785: Thomas Jefferson



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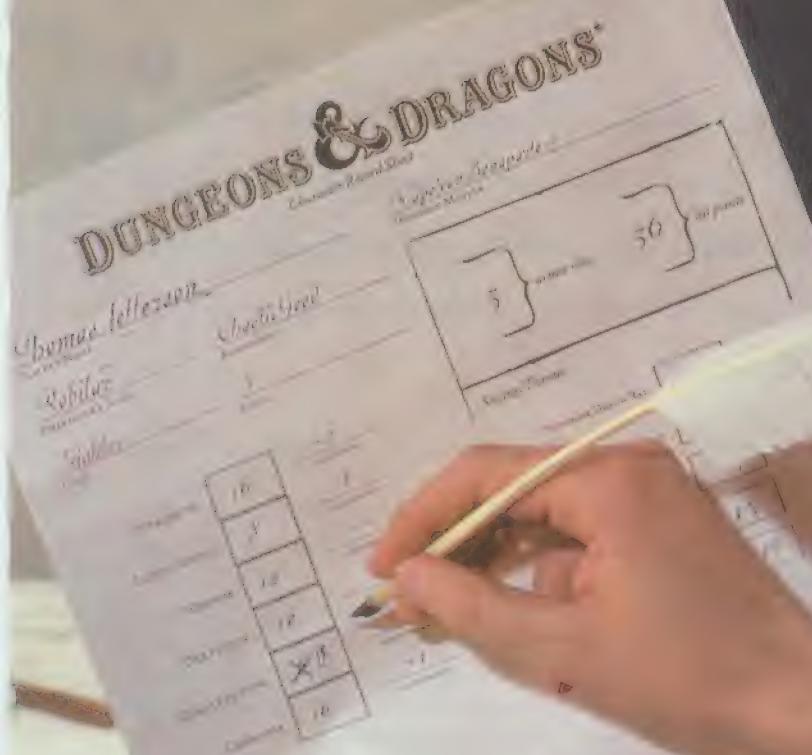
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Myth: Foes of Muirthemne

The armies of the
Fallen Lords are
now set to invade
your AD&D®
campaign.

by
Peter Whitley

Illustrated by
Juan Ramirez

Most serious computer gamers spend much more time playing their favorite games than reading a book, yet nobody seems to expect much from the characters found in computer games. Tolkien knock-offs and tired stereotypes permeate the computer roleplaying market.

Not so with *Myth: The Fallen Lords*. The folks at Bungie make no secret of their history with the AD&D® game. (One multiplayer map is named "Creep on the Borderlands.") Rumor has it that their upcoming map editor uses traditional AD&D statistics to define creatures. Regardless of their interests, they still created a fantastic real-time strategy epic for the computer and some cool new monsters that make great additions to the AD&D game.

In the *Myth* setting, the monstrous adversaries are allied with the Fallen Lords, though there is no particular reason that their intentions should not be tailored to fit your existing campaign. If

you develop a campaign around these creatures, you might also consider adding some of the artifacts they struggle to acquire: the Tain and the Total Codex.

The Tain is a planar prison that confines scores of dark minions, while the Total Codex is a volume detailing the strengths and weaknesses of all beings (including the Fallen Lords). If the Tain were to fall into the hands of the Fallen Lords, the hordes would be released. If the Total Codex is recovered, it might reveal enough secrets of the Fallen Lords to defeat them.

Peter Whitley is better known as "Petis <Corp>" on bungie.net, where he hones his Myth skills. When he isn't being crushed by enemy armies, he works as a graphic designer for Wizards of the Coast periodicals.

MUCH MAY BE LEARNED FROM THE JOURNAL'S PASSAGES, which tell of the gruesome foes encountered in our battles against the Fallen Lords:

Last night one of our comrades began losing his mind. He had three fingers cleaved from his left hand, and the bitter cold offered no comfort. We had been ambushed by a ghôl patrol early in the morning, and he attempted to outrun the fell creatures. If not for our archers, he'd be missing more than his fingers.

Now he knows. Nobody outruns a ghôl.



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any; prefer plains and foothills
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day to dusk
DIET:	Carnivore, scavenger
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi (2-4)
TREASURE:	O
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil

NO. APPEARING:	3-24 (3d8)
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	18, climb 6 (see below)
HIT DICE:	3
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE:	1-6/1-6 (hand weapon)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Thrown item (see below)
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Unsteady (5-7)
XP VALUE:	65

Ghôls are hunched, bipedal mammals that roam in packs. Because of their posture, they are frequently mistaken for wolves or wild dogs; however, their speed often betrays their true identity. Their disproportionate forelimbs are nearly twice as long as their torsos, and ghôls often use them as an extra pair of legs for maximum speed. Despite their awkward physiques, ghôls are strong climbers, but a natural fear of heights limits their climbing to steep hills and rocky outcroppings. Ghôls also fear deep water, fire, and enclosed subterranean spaces. They prefer open areas where they can see farther and take advantage of their speed.

Thick, short hair covers a ghôl's entire body, which varies from gray to vibrant orange or brown, with the hair on its underside being a few shades lighter. The ghôl's small head is punctuated by an oversized jaw with large, flat, exposed teeth and gums. Ghôls have no lips, and they salivate profusely.

Combat: Ghôls hunt in packs and focus on easy prey. They are capable of short bursts of speed and rush their prey as a group. When outnumbered, they target ranged weapon users first with hit-and-run tactics, ducking from cover to cover to cause confusion and panic. If their normal tactics are hopeless, they lurk just beyond range and wait for a good opportunity to strike. They abandon prey that is too well prepared or protected after a few hours.

Scavenged and improvised weapons are common among ghôls. They use broken armor, rocks, sticks, or other debris to throw at their targets as they close for melee. This distraction gives ghôls a +2 bonus to initiative in the first round of melee. Ghôls may use this attack only once per engagement and thereafter employ hand weapons, typically short swords. Hunting ghôls wear small leather sacks tied to their backs that hold their meager belongings.



Habitat/Society: Ghôl culture strongly resembles that of wild dogs and wolves. In every pack, there is an alpha individual who leads the hunts and establishes the season's living area. Ghôls speak in elaborate grunts and guttural rumbles. They can communicate complex concepts, but their language revolves around immediate needs: hunting and pack issues. It is believed that ghôls maintain personal names.

Finely manufactured items hold little appeal to ghôls. They prefer edible treasures and items that can assist in hunting or combat. Ghôls don't wear armor or clothing, but they have been known to wear identifying armbands when involved in organized warfare.

Ghôls can be organized into service by magical means and are susceptible to any animal control spells. If a ghôl is cornered or trapped, it assumes a passive posture of surrender by lying down or rolling over. They may be put into service with physical restraints; given any opportunity, however, they attempt to escape or kill their captors.

Ecology: Ghôls live in burrows, caves, and even bramble fields. They mate once per year and give birth to a litter of two to six pups in the early summer. During the six-month nursing period, all but the mother ghôls hunt. The hunters return to the den and regurgitate their meals for the young and their mothers. At six months, the young are ready to accompany the pack on their hunts and at one year contribute to the hunt.

If large game is unavailable, ghôls rely on carrion and small game. Wily tacticians and opportunists, ghôls are not averse to hunting humanoids, especially the weak or unprepared.

A ghôl pack marks its hunting territory with small heaps of detritus and scat. Captive ghôl packs tolerate other packs if they must, but in the wild they defend their territory if it is challenged.

Fetch (Myth)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Desert regions
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	All times
DIET:	Unknown (see below)
INTELLIGENCE:	Highly (13-14)
TREASURE:	F (halved, no art objects)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	3
THAC0:	Nil (see below)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE:	2-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Lightning bolt
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5-6½' tall)
MORALE:	Elite (13-14)
XP VALUE:	175

Mature fetch can easily pass for human except for their pale skin and the pair of 3"-long, hornlike protrusions on their heads. Fetch do most things in a human fashion. However, they are not natural denizens of the Prime Material plane. They were summoned here by mages long ago who mistakenly thought that their powers could be harnessed. Fetch have not found the Prime Material plane to their liking and avoid its inhabitants.

Originally from Baator, fetch are powerful foes. They consistently demonstrate cruel, vicious behavior and enjoy torturing or taking advantage of weaker species.

Occasionally a fetch disguises itself as a human. This rare procedure is done only when a situation absolutely demands it. Because fetch are naturally self-absorbed and vain, impersonating any other creature is considered humiliating.

Combat: Fetch can harness ambient electrical energy and focus it into a lightning bolt that deals 2-12 points of damage up to 60 feet away. This bolt also damages anyone caught between the fetch and its target. As a bolt hits each victim beyond the first, the damage is halved (roll for damage for the first target only). A fetch has natural immunity to its own electrical discharges, but the creature is not immune to the lightning attack of other fetch.

On rare occasions, a pair of fetch works in tandem, combining their lightning attacks to double the range and damage. Working together usually proves fatal for one of the fetch, as the wicked creatures inevitably turn on each other.

Because of their low movement rate, fetch always attempt to attack from afar and call for reinforcements if their victims attempt to melee. They enjoy displaying their power and sometimes unleash vicious attacks upon their own comrades to demonstrate their awesome ability.



On the battlefield, fetch often don the skins of their victims and can be mistaken for zombies. This practice

is more common when fetch are pressed into duty, as they believe it strikes fear into their enemies.

Fetch disdain anything of elven origin and shun all weapons and armor. They have no defense for melee attacks and flee combat if they are unsuccessful with their lightning attacks.

Habitat/Society: Fetch are methodical and consider matters deeply before acting on them. They avoid encounters with all creatures, including other fetch, and prefer coercing and enslaving lesser creatures to fill their various needs. The intelligence and wisdom of the fetch, though high, is only a measure of the depths to which this race has descended in its vanity, greed, and passion for cruelty. Fetch have a unique language but rarely speak it to outsiders, so it is not well known to nonfetch.

Fetch live in elaborate clay and brick dwellings in the most remote desert areas. They hoard great amounts of wealth but scorn art objects created by other races, considering them crude and inferior. Tokens from the battlefield will often be found proudly displayed around the fetch's lair.

Because they are solitary, it is not known how (or even whether) fetch mate.

Ecology: Fetch originally come from Baator and have no position in the natural Prime Material cycle. Contrary to their appearance, they are not mammals and do not eat. Fetch kill with impunity and seek to destroy that which cannot be owned, used, or manipulated into service.

They have been known to share territory with blue dragons, though the relationships are tenuous, as the blue dragon is the only creature that the fetch tolerate—and only barely.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1-3
ARMOR CLASS:	9
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	1 hit point
THAC0:	Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE:	3-24 + poison and/or paralysis (see below)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Self destruction (see below)
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See below
SIZE:	M (5-6' tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP VALUE:	120

Barrier wights are bloated undead creatures covered with enormous blisters. Because of their animal intelligence, they are unwavering in their simple duties.

Barrier wights are incredibly explosive. Should one suffer even a single point of damage, it explodes with a shower of contagious pus (70%), poisonous gas (20%), or both (10%) depending on the wight.

Combat: Barrier wights do not move unless the conditions for their actions have been met. When directed to attack, they lumber toward their target until they are about 20 feet away, at which point they self-inflict some sort of wound, usually using their fingernails or a small knife. Though this wound kills them, it also triggers the dreadful explosion.

Characters within 10 feet of an exploding barrier wight suffer 3-24 points of damage. Those who are 10-30 feet away from the exploding wight suffer 1-6 points of concussive damage. In both cases, characters are exposed to the contents of the wight.

Those caught in the blast of pus-filled wights must make a saving throw vs. poison or contract a disease (described below). Victims of gas-filled wights must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or be paralyzed for 1-4 rounds. In the rare cases in which a barrier wight contains both gas and pus, victims must make a separate saving throw against each effect.

Should more than one appear, barrier wights remain 20 feet apart. When one explodes, it causes all other barrier wights within 20 feet to explode also. Those caught within the radius of more than one explosion suffer damage from each wight according to its proximity; however, victims must make a saving throw vs. poison and/or paralysis only once.

The barrier wight's pus is a potent, disease-carrying contact poison. If the victim's saving throw succeeds, the victim's body



fights off the infection. If it fails, the victim loses half of his or her remaining hit points (rounded up) for each day that the disease goes untreated. The illness may be treated by both magical and mundane means.

Barrier wights are excellent guards. Because of their explosive attack, they are usually found at narrow crossings or in smaller rooms. They may be turned by priests (as 5-HD creatures) or commanded to retreat by their masters.

Barrier wights are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold person*, poison, and cold-based spells. Should a cleric cast any type of healing spell on a barrier wight, however, the creature collapses into a pile of harmless debris.

Habitat/Society: Barrier wights have no culture, nor do they communicate in any way. Should their masters fail to issue orders, wights remain motionless until they are killed. Barrier wights are typically humanoids. Although other mammals may be made into barrier wights, this practice is extremely rare. The creation of the barrier wight is considered a form of necromancy and is essentially an evil act.

Ecology: Barrier wights do not have a role in the natural cycle. Wights of the pus variety can sometimes leave clumps of explosive pus after they have detonated. Each time a wight explodes, there is a 15% chance that an "unexploded" piece the size of a grapefruit remains within the blast area. When hurled, this nasty chunk deals 1-4 points of damage, and those struck must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or become afflicted with disease. Anyone handling this refuse without adequate protection (such as a glove or gauntlet) is exposed to the disease and must make a saving throw normally. This contagious material is highly sought by certain necromancers.

Trow (Myth)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any; prefer warmer climes
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average to genius (8-18)
TREASURE:	A
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1-3
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	6
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE:	3-18 (3d6)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (8-12' tall)
MORALE:	Steady (11-12)
XP VALUE:	270

Trow are remnants of a once great culture that nurtured the arts and sciences and dealt peacefully with its neighbors. As their civilization declined, the trow began enslaving lesser species to assist in their increasingly antagonistic goals. This practice lead to their ultimate demise, as ogres, trolls, and hill giants eventually rebelled against their captors. The few trow who remain today are reminders of how corrupt their species became.

Trow are giant, hairless humanoids with tiny ears and massive, elephantine legs. Skin color ranges from cream to dark brown. Because they remove their body hair, a trow's body displays the scars acquired through years of combat. In colder climes, they wear furs adorned with the possessions (or body parts) of their foes.

With no toes on their massive feet, trow step more heavily than other humanoids of a similar size, so their footsteps are often felt before the trow are spotted. Once the trow is heard, however, it is usually only moments before it can be seen crashing through the brush.

Combat: Most trow are honorable in combat and, before attacking, issue a bellow of warning that may be heard up to a mile away. The roar is not an attack in itself and has no lasting physical effects.

Trow attack with their huge elephantine feet. The most common tactic is to kick their enemies into the air (2d6 points of damage, plus 1d6 points of falling damage) then attack again before the victim has a chance to recover, gaining a -4 bonus to initiative against opponents who were kicked on the previous round. Having little fear for their own lives, trow rush headlong into battle with little maneuvering. Powerful kicking and thrashing attacks make them a popular recruit for large-scale skirmishes. The force of the trow's kick makes platemail a poor choice for defense, as the mail can become permanently



crushed around an opponent's body. A natural "20" on a trow's attack against an opponent in platemail requires the armor to make a successful saving throw vs. crushing blow. Failure indicates that the victim is imprisoned in his or her own armor, able to break free only with a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll or with help from a companion who spends 1d4 rounds trying to free the victim.

Naturally tough skin takes the place of artificial armor for trow. Furthermore, scars are considered a sign of beauty and wisdom and are generally encouraged.

Habitat/Society: Trow once maintained an enlightened culture with significant artistic and intellectual achievements. Relics of these times are long forgotten, and the ruins of trow cities are deeply buried. In spite of the corruption that caused the fall of the species, trow still withhold a fanatical national identity.

Trow were originally magically created as workers and warriors years ago. Since they are no longer being created, they are a doomed race. They cannot reproduce or be reincarnated. Sages estimate that there are approximately eighty trow remaining scattered throughout the lands.

Ecology: Trow do not need to eat but will do so as a sign of respect, if food is offered. They also offer food to their guests.

Trow lairs are often caves near the ruins of their once-great cities, monuments, or temples, which they work to rebuild. Monetary treasures hold little attraction, but items of a more ornamental nature might find their way into the trow lair. Trow have an affinity for fancy stonework and elaborate architecture.

Among other races, trow skulls are considered a prestigious trophy and are valued at 2,500 gp to some buyers. Trow hides are believed to have special magic-resistant properties, but this has yet to be proven.



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A Little Bit of Magic

Game balance
and magical
items can go
hand-in-hand.
Just remember
that a little can
mean a lot.

by
Lloyd Brown III

Illustrated by
Llyn Hunter

THE DANGER OF "MONTY HAUL" CAMPAIGNS—THOSE in which PCs become super-powerful through wealth and magic—is often a threat even to the most balanced and judicious games. DMs hear cryptic warnings about not letting the campaign succumb to this fate and are urged to strip powerful magic from the PCs through such horrible devices as theft, loss, and destruction.

While drastic measures might have to be taken for a campaign overwhelmed by powerful PCs, new campaigns (or restarted campaigns) can be begun with confidence, foresight, and a little sneakiness on the part of the DM. Instead of keeping all magical items out of the PCs' hands, the DM can allow them to discover just as many or even more magical items.

More magic? Yes, more, but of a different quality. Instead of giving numerous plusses to each weapon, multiple layers of deadliness to staves and rods, and protective amulets that guarantee immunity to attack, the DM should use creativity in describing the magical items to make each one unique. At the same time, the DM can allow lower-level PCs to find a few magical items of limited power.

By including a lower level of magic between mundane equipment and the heavy artillery, players learn to appreciate their magical finds while leaving the flavor of the campaign unspoiled. Part of the charm of the game is discovering new toys. Players love to find magical items and see what sort of

powers they have. Some find this discovery process as much fun as using the item to blast enemies to pieces once they have it.

The DM also adds a "buffer" of play to the game. Instead of throwing away the normal platemail and putting on the *platemail of ethereality*, a player might be perfectly happy when his or her character finds a suit of rustproof platemail.

Another benefit of creating low-power magical items is the enrichment they provide for those campaign settings that restrict or limit magic to emphasize the campaign atmosphere. The LANKHMAR™ setting is one such game world, and the RAVENLOFT® campaign is another. Nearly all of the historically based supplements provide frameworks for using few or no magical items in those campaigns, and they are prime candidates for moderate application of magic.

The DM has a wide variety of tactics to use when creating magical items of low power. In addition, many of these ideas can be employed to tone down existing items or powers to a reasonable level. Many of these ideas can be com-

bined or modified to give an item a helpful but not overpowering magical ability, making a little bit just enough.

Noncombat Effects

Many power gamers tend to disregard items with noncombat effects in favor of other, more powerful items. Noncombat effects might affect speech, body odor, sleep, the comfort of clothing, food, music, art, crafts, and a hundred other facets of life that fill the gaps between adventures. If the DM has trouble integrating these items into the campaign, an NPC can demonstrate to the players how effective such an item can be.

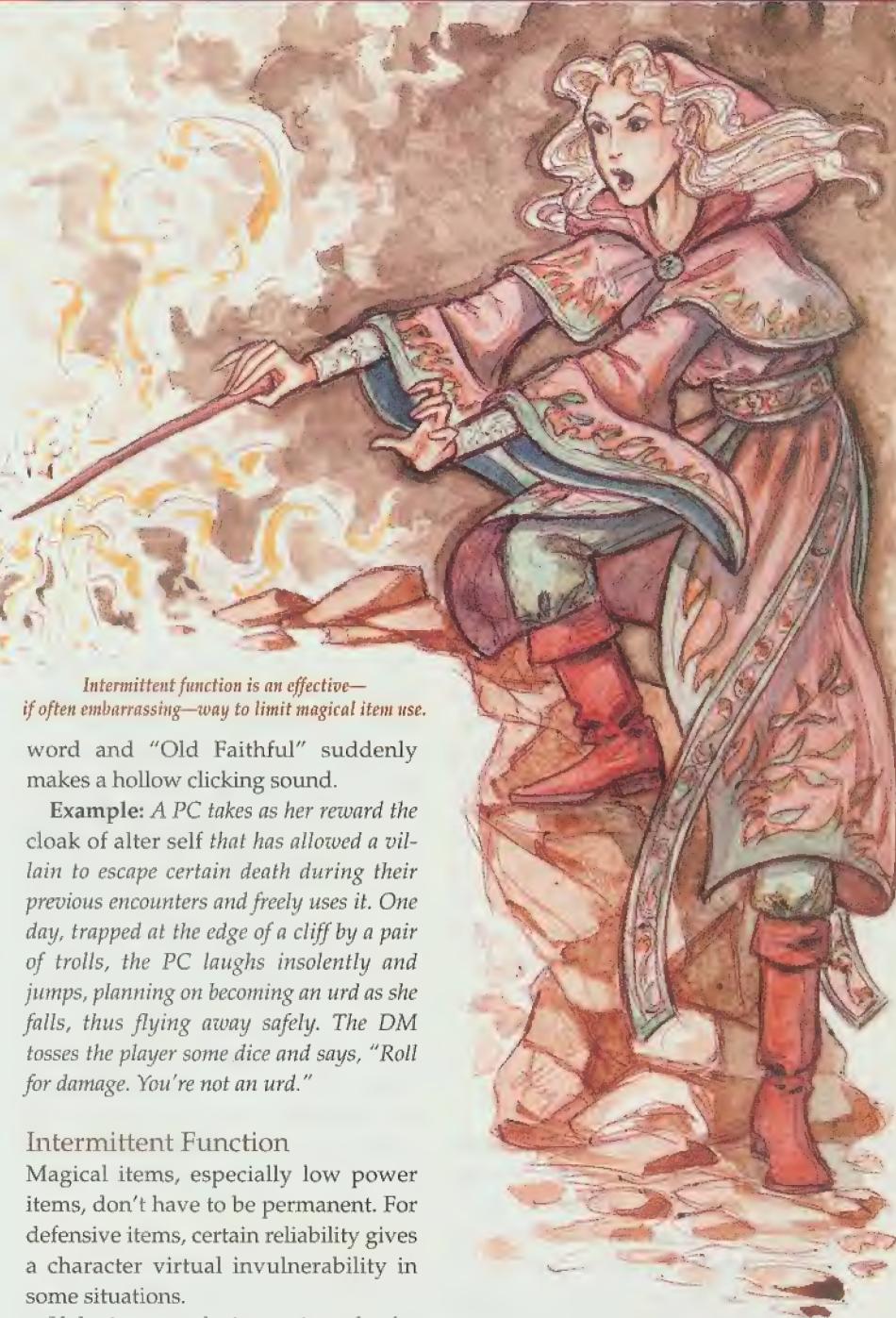
Example: A PC paladin is selected to knight a young candidate of his order. To his great embarrassment, the paladin stutters as he knights the lad. Normally an eloquent speaker, he takes it as an omen and considers resigning his position in favor of a rising member of the order. An old advisor persuades the PC to investigate some of the attendees to determine whether any of them used mischievous magic to shame the paladin during the ceremony.

As the PC discovers, a knight who supports the paladin's likely replacement owns a helm that causes speech confusion on a target. The villainous knight is forced to leave the order—without his helm.

Charges

Rings, wands, and other favorite items often have a finite number of charges. Once the charges are used up, the item is no longer magical. Some items even disintegrate. Charged miscellaneous magical items should not have as many uses as rods or wands. A maximum might be 30 for a weak item, 10 or fewer for a more potent item. The DM can standardize the number for all items of that class or assign a range and roll for the number of charges. A good range might be 3d6 or 3d8.

Requiring an item to expend a charge whenever a power is invoked is a good way to ensure its limited use, especially for new items: When the player discovers an item, he or she does not know if it can be used daily, weekly, or for how long. Many players are shocked and distressed whenever their character shouts the command



Intermittent function is an effective—if often embarrassing—way to limit magical item use.

word and “Old Faithful” suddenly makes a hollow clicking sound.

Example: A PC takes as her reward the cloak of alter self that has allowed a villain to escape certain death during their previous encounters and freely uses it. One day, trapped at the edge of a cliff by a pair of trolls, the PC laughs insolently and jumps, planning on becoming an urd as she falls, thus flying away safely. The DM tosses the player some dice and says, “Roll for damage. You’re not an urd.”

Intermittent Function

Magical items, especially low power items, don’t have to be permanent. For defensive items, certain reliability gives a character virtual invulnerability in some situations.

If the item works intermittently, the character can only guess when the vaunted magic might save the day. This situation might be fine for a wild mage, but most characters see it as a distinct disadvantage rather than just “charm.” An alternative method that is better suited for game play is to require that the item recharge for a period of time before it can be used again. The item works for a turn (for example), needs to rest for 1d6 turns, then functions again.

Example: The DM has a captivating background and physical description for

his new bracers of protection from normal missiles. He also suspects that the bracers are too powerful for his low-level PCs. He decides that they work in one-turn bursts, once every 2 hours. At the start of game play, he rolls a few d12s (12 turns in each 2-hour period) and records when the bracers work. If the PCs can time the use of the item, they can take advantage of its tremendous power. The DM, however, has plans to make sure that they can’t always wait for the bracers to activate before battle.

Self-Destructive

The best examples of self-destructive items are magical items that work only once, then lose their power. Existing magics of this class include most missile weapons, eggs, candles and tapers, and books. The simple way to use these items is to allow each to "hold" a spell. When the egg is thrown or the taper burned, the item releases a spell effect.

One of the best compromises between charges and permanent items is to allow an item to function a limited number of times per day or per week.

Example: The DM plans an encounter with a number of skilled fighters and thieves but wishes to give them some magical assistance, so he decides to allow one or two of them to use a self-destructive magical item. The DM has a neutral wizard create a temporary magical item that simulates the effects of a chromatic orb. In this case, it is a small colored ball that is effectively the same as the manifestation of that spell. When the ball is thrown, it becomes a normal chromatic orb. The DM further limits the item by setting it at 5th level (1d12 points of damage plus a stinking cloud effect).

Limited Time Period

One of the best compromises between charges and permanent items is to allow an item to function a limited number of times per day or per week. The character with the item knows that it won't always save the day. The most popular existing example of this limitation is probably the *crystal ball*, but this limit can also reduce the extensive power of the *rings of elemental command* and other items.

Example: An NPC acquaintance of the PCs has just perished. The PCs know that she had a hat of disguise and decide to use it. The DM worries that the hat is too powerful in the hands of the PCs. Since the NPC did not use the hat often enough in front of the PCs to prove that it could be used at any time, the DM decides to limit its use to once per day—even though he hadn't made that decision earlier, when only the NPC used the hat.

Magic-Reducing

These minor magical items reduce the effectiveness of another item, and the user must determine which is more important—the affected item or the new one. More commonly, the item is simply not cumulative with other magic of the same type. Sometimes, it inhibits the function or other types of items, such as a shield that doesn't allow magical

gives +1 on bow attacks) might help only wood elf characters.

Example: The DM randomly rolls a short sword +1 with several special abilities for a magical item. He keeps the item but decides that it can be used to full effect only by halfling characters, knowing that the PCs include no halflings. The PCs can use the item as a "plain" short sword +1, but until a halfling joins the group, they won't gain the benefits of its other powers.

Effects Limited to Certain Creatures

The magic of the item might affect only a certain race, monster, or HD of creatures, much like *scare* and *sleep*. To keep the power of the items low, a limit of 4–6 HD for one creature or 8–12 HD for multiple creatures is a good guide.

Example: The DM has allowed the PCs to find a ring of animal friendship. He has already decided to limit its effectiveness to include only animals of a certain geographic area. Then he notices that the campaign has not left that area, so that limit will not often come into play. He also decides that the ring should not function in conjunction with another magical ring, intentionally changing the rule that two rings may be worn and operate at the same time. The druid PC, who already uses a ring of protection, must remove that ring to use the ring of animal friendship.

Race/Class/Alignment Limited

Some magical items appeal most strongly to a specific class or race of character. A magical pick that breaks stone twice as fast as a normal pick (but provides no combat bonuses against stone creatures) might prove useful to a dwarf. A thief might appreciate an arm-band that provides a saving throw bonus vs. injected poisons.

This limit applies only if the PCs include a member of the appropriate class, race, or alignment. If no appropriate members are present, then the party can't use the item. A shield might have a +1 bonus only in the hands of an orc, or an amulet of accuracy (which

Reduced Effects

With little effort, a DM can take an existing magical item—one with powers that could be considered excessive—and make it more suitable for play. A variation of the *wand of lightning* that delivers small, ranged jolts equivalent to a *shocking grasp* spell would serve a low-level wizard nicely.

Example: The DM knows how much gauntlets of ogre power and girdles of giant strength can "juice up" the fighters in the party. Still, the party has no strong fighters and could use a little boost for an upcoming adventure. The DM allows the party to find a pair of gauntlets of bugbear strength, which afford a Strength score of 17.

Animal or Companion Items

Some existing magical items made for humans or demihumans can be duplicated to serve the animals, familiars, and other nonhuman companions of an adventuring party. A suit of *leather armor +1* sized for a war dog, a needle-sized *dagger +1* for a homonculous, or a *collar of infravision* for a cat familiar all help a creature not entirely under the player's control.

Example: *A determined player has lost three mages because her familiars keep getting killed. Still, she tries again and summons a familiar. The DM, in an effort to keep this character in play long enough to gain a level or two, allows the party to hear a rumor that leads to an abandoned wizard's tower that might hold a magical silk wrap. The little scarf gives a feline familiar the benefits of an aid spell once a day when its owner strokes the cat. A "free" 1d8 hit points, the DM feels, should help the familiar and its owner last a bit longer than their predecessors.*

Semi-Permanent Items

The DARK SUN® campaign accessory *Dragon Kings* introduced a 7th-level wizard spell called *semipermanency*, which allows magical spells to last for several months or years. If a DM wishes, he or she could borrow this spell to allow a magical item to continue working only as long as it's convenient once the PCs find it. The item might last another couple of years; it might only hold its magic for another week. When the item mysteriously fails, the PCs probably assume that the charges are expended. High-level characters might discover this new spell somehow, but by then more powerful items should dominate the campaign world.

Example: *The DM borrows a plot from a favorite author and allows the PCs to find, seemingly by accident, a ring of invisibility, which becomes a crucial plot device. Once the DM's intended adventure is over, the PCs may keep the ring, but its magic wears off in just a few short months.*

Effects to Avoid

Some game effects are simply too powerful to be considered "minor magic." Most standard items have one or more of these qualities.

All-Encompassing Protection

Protective items should have a specific range of attacks from which they afford their protection. Items that improve AC should carry one or more of the limitations mentioned earlier. A *ring of protection from breath weapons +1*, for example, provides a +1 bonus to saving throws only against breath weapons. A brooch might bestow a similar bonus against gaze attacks, while a cloak might protect against Conjuration spells.

Plusses

Weapons and armor with plusses tend to snowball into more powerful items. Characters accumulate the strongest item, judged by the numerical plus. Instead of offering one or more of these items to choose from, the DM can offer other benefits to items that normally carry plusses only.

With weapons, the DM can create magical items that provide reductions in weapon speed factor by one or two points, giving characters an advantage when determining initiative. If the campaign uses *PLAYER'S OPTION*® rules, the weapon might have a bonus on knock-down dice (or use a larger die than normal). The weapon might be usable by characters that aren't proficient with it, with the penalties for familiarity rather than nonproficiency, or no penalty for characters already familiar with it.

Magical items aren't just for player characters, but because of jealous paladins!



A suit of armor might be lighter than normal, resist damage (prolonging its usefulness), protect the wearer from the environment (rain or nonmagical heat or cold), or improve the wearer's Armor Class when attacked by certain creatures (goblins, dark elves, or arachnids, for example).

Duplication of Form

There are only so many *rings of protection* PCs can find in any given campaign, so some duplication might occur. At some point, the DM must branch out and change some effects to keep the players guessing. A *wand of color sprays* is OK, but probably not the potentially abusive *wands of charming persons, wands of chromatic orbs, wands of identifying, wands of sleep*, etc.

The DM should change the form of these items and use one or more of the power-limiting ideas above to make each one unique. A *wand of sleep*, as suggested earlier, might work only on

humans. The *wand of identifying* can be changed to a dust that is sprinkled over the item, becoming a self-destructive item found in d6+12 packets. The *wand of chromatic orbs* might become the spheres mentioned earlier.

Ability Enhancement

Magical items that add multiple points to ability scores have no effect in many cases, but when they do, they provide PCs with incredible advantages. A cleric whose Dexterity is raised from 9 to 13 sees no change in AC or attack adjustment—only proficiency checks. A thief, on the other hand, whose Dexterity is raised from 14 to 18 gains a 75% bonus to thieving skills!

If the DM wishes to adjust ability scores, raising them above 14 usually gives PCs greater power than the DM might intend. Perhaps the DM could allow the PCs an item that enhances the ability scores for proficiency checks only.

Alternatively, if the PLAYER'S OPTION rules are used, only one of the two subability scores should be raised. Strength/Stamina is raised, for instance, but not Strength/Muscle. Better yet, the DM can direct bonuses to proficiency checks by creating magical tools that give bonuses to the proficiency checks.

Permanent Effects

Even a minor protection or ability can be potent when it is reliable all of the time. DMs should be careful with these abilities and either balance them with liabilities or remove the permanency and limit the time of use, number of uses, or effectiveness. For details, refer to the section on limiting powers above.

For another point of view, the DM should consider how few wizards reach 12th level and learn the spell *enchant an item*. If 12th level is rare, how

much rarer is 16th level, when the wizard might learn *permanency*? According to the *DM OPTION®: High Level Campaigns*, only about one in sixteen of those 12th-level wizards make it to 16th level. Even if a wizard can learn *permanency*, who wants to give up a point of Constitution to create a low-power magical item? Between these considerations, well over 90% of the magical items in a campaign should be temporary in nature.

Cursed Items

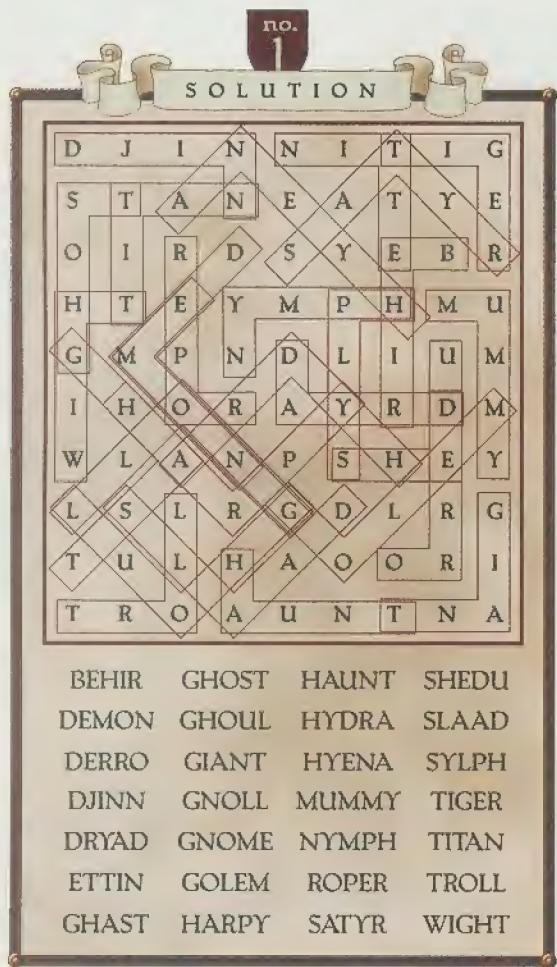
Cursed items typically result from errors in enchanting more powerful items. When one of these enchantments goes awry, however, the effects should rarely be fatal. They can be annoying, alarming, and sometimes humorous, but they should never actually threaten the life of a character unless the curse is invoked at a spectacularly inopportune time or the character does something really stupid when trying to remove the curse. Simply discarding or removing the item can break some of these curses. For the rest, *dispel magic*, the item's destruction, or *remove curse* frees the character from the item's grip.

Reminder

Not every item described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* is too powerful and should be denied to or taken from the PCs. Creating items that characters can use for a while before picking up the more powerful items lets the DM control the campaign better. If the DM starts the campaign with low-powered magical items, then mixes in the stronger items as the characters advance, he or she can stave off the dreaded overkill of too much magic in the hands of the PCs. Better balance means better fun, and fun is the goal of the game.



Lloyd thinks magical items and other goodies are easy additions to make to the AD&D game. The people who impress him are the excellent artists who bring the fantasy worlds to life.



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Dark Phoenix (Jean Grey)

Skills

Martial Arts, Piloting
Meditation, Mental Control, Trance

Powers

Energy Control—All Energies 30

Psychic Blast 30

Mind-Blowing, Resistance to Mental Control

Telekinesis 30

Forceflight, Force Bolts, Force Field, Passengers

Telepathy 30

Life Detection, Mental Probe, Psi-Screen, Psychic Detection, Rangeless, Telelocation

Space Flight 30

Life Support

Unique Trait: Using her powers causes the manifestation of the Phoenix Force, a fiery bird shape that rises around Jean.

Calling: Demolisher

Hindrances: Triggered—Powerless (when Jean can wrestle control away)

Personality: Dark Phoenix is the brutish evil side of Jean Grey's personality with a whole lot of power behind it. Dark Phoenix is not especially malicious as long as Jean keeps it in check, but it is difficult to fight against a hungry, destructive, limitless power.

History

After the Phoenix Force resurrected a duplicate of Jean Grey, things seemed fine. But then, Mastermind—masquerading as "Jason Wyngarde"—slowly began stimulating Jean's darker

side. Using the Hellfire Club's considerable resources, and assisted by the White Queen, Wyngarde corrupted Jean's mind to place her under his control. After several encounters, Mastermind announced he possessed Jean Grey's body and soul, transforming her into the Black Queen of the Hellfire Club.

Things looked grim for the X-Men, but Mastermind hadn't counted on the Phoenix Force. With both Jean's goodness and her mental barriers down, the Phoenix Force took over, manifesting as the Dark Phoenix. The good news was that Dark Phoenix had no problem breaking Mastermind's control (or the power of most of the Hellfire Club). The bad news was that Dark Phoenix was an infinitely powerful evil.

Drunk with power and craving more, Dark Phoenix took off for a distant galaxy, where it promptly drained a star's energy. Unfortunately, a planet of five billion sentient beings orbited that star, all of whom died with it.

This planet was allied with the Shi'ar Galactic Empire, which took exception to having a member planet unceremoniously destroyed. They wanted vengeance. Upon Dark Phoenix's return to Earth, Professor X contacted the good that still lived in Jean. With Jean's strength, Professor X placed stops on the Phoenix Force. This action, however, was not enough to appease the Shi'ar Empire's vengeance. They still demanded the death of Phoenix.

The X-Men would not allow Jean to be handed over, so they fought for Jean's freedom on the blue area of the moon. Ultimately, they lost. Even so, the combined might of the Shi'ar Empire could not stop the Dark Phoenix—only Jean could. While she held the Phoenix Force at bay, she placed herself in the line of fire of the blue area's ancient automatic defense systems, sacrificing herself to save the universe from Dark Phoenix.

Narrator Notes

The Phoenix Force is one of a few supremely infinite powers running loose in the Marvel Universe, and unlimited power gets old fast in a roleplaying game. If you want to use the Phoenix Force in play, consider presenting it with Professor X's mental blocks in place. On the other end of the scale, try throwing in a bunch of other infinite forces into the mix! Is the Phoenix Force out of control again? Round up some heroes, retrieve all the infinity gems, and recreate the ever-popular Infinity Gauntlet! But who could your heroes trust to wear it? If you're feeling really crazy, send your heroes back in time for the Beyonder's help. What would the Beyonder do? Fight? Talk? Fall in love? More importantly, what will your heroes do when one of these things happens?



by Jeff "Zippy" Quick & Steve Miller

Phoenix (Rachel Summers)

Skills

Brawling

Acrobatics, Contingent Attack, Martial Arts

History (her reality)

Mental Control, Survival, Trance

Powers

Detection (Mutants) 15

Psi-Screen +15

Telekinesis 16

Forceflight, Force Bolts, Passengers

Telepathy 14

Unique Trait: Using her powers causes the manifestation of the Phoenix Force, a fiery bird shape that rises around Rachel.

Calling: Peace of Mind

Hindrances: Frenzied

Personality: Rachel is haunted by the images of the awful future she fears will come to pass, not to mention the emotional scars inflicted by her horrible upbringing. She is protective of her friends and teammates, and she often unleashes a berzerker rage upon those who harm them, brandishing the full violence of the Phoenix Force. Because Rachel came to the past to change the future, she often wonders what reality truly is. These thoughts trouble her greatly.

History

In an alternate future, Rachel Summers is the daughter of Scott Summers and Jean Grey. As her mother before her, Rachel is a vessel for the fiery entity known as the Phoenix Force.

In Rachel's reality, Sentinels control North America. They trained Rachel to be a "mutant hound," a mutant trained to hunt other mutants (her facial tattoos mark her as one). She eventually betrayed her masters and traveled into the past to prevent her reality from ever coming to be. In response, the Sentinels sent an advanced Sentinel, the hunter-killer Nimrod, after her. The X-Men defeated Nimrod, and Rachel started to create a life for herself decades before she was even born.

When the X-Men apparently died, Rachel began to question the nature of reality. Nothing like this had happened in her "history." She

moved to Muir island and helped found Excalibur. After many adventures, she finally made the ultimate sacrifice to achieve her mission, giving her life to fore-stall an event that might have led to Sentinel dominance. Many still question whether someone who dies decades before she was even born—particularly a vessel of the Phoenix Force—can ever be said to be truly dead.

7D

Strength

BB

Agility

4D

Intellect

12E

Willpower

2

Edge

4/25

Hand Size





Role Models

ALTERNITY® Game Aliens

By J.D. Wiker and Jim Bishop

Without a miniatures line specifically dedicated to the ALTERNITY® game (at least, not yet), "making do" is extremely important to anyone running a miniatures campaign. This obstacle shouldn't stop you from using miniatures. In fact, it's a chance to exercise some cleverness.

The first step is to browse the *ALIEN COMPENDIUM™* supplement—and to look around the house. A number of STAR*DRIVE® setting aliens can be represented by ordinary household items, saving money right off the bat. For example, a toy alligator can serve as the vicious mudfiend, and plastic bugs can easily represent drenex or terragin.

Short on toys? Try representing a spidermist or werewisp with a pinch of cotton dabbed with paint, or a crystallis or minshore crystal with an ordinary chunk of crystal. A small marble or ball bearing makes a fine orbweaver.

Markings & Camouflage

Painting markings on miniatures—numbers, insignia, and so forth—requires a steady hand, but with practice, anyone can do it. There are also ways to "cheat," such as painting a colored triangle over a differently colored circle, or using Roman numerals. (Curved Arabic numbers are more difficult to paint.)

Camouflage is easier. Begin with a solid color, then scattered irregular patches in a different color. Follow with more irregular patches in a third color. Don't worry if some of the patches overlap; in fact, they should!

Next comes a trip to the local game store with a short list of aliens that look like existing fantasy creatures. Remember that the same figure can look extremely different depending on the paint job, so don't focus too heavily on what the figure was originally intended to represent. Keep in mind that a Ral Partha pattern spider makes a fine gevlin, and a nexus crawler makes a convincing klick.

An ordinary lizardman (perhaps with any weapons snipped off with wire-cutters) could be a veractor, while a giant lizard makes a nice kettledrake. A giant ape becomes a thraat, and a sabertooth tiger becomes a sandgrotha. An AD&D® game gorgon looks suitably like a warbeast, and a sylph can serve as an evrem with the right paint scheme. And though they are a little difficult to find these days, a celestial chorus female would make a nice female fraal, while Sabbat vampires could easily pass as gardhyi. The paint job wouldn't even have to change much.

Stowaway!

In this short ALTERNITY scenario, the heroes are aboard a cargo ship that has made an emergency planetfall on Rivendale. After liftoff, they discovered they had picked up a stowaway—a bioelectric insect swarm known as a spidermist, now loose in the cargo hold. If the thing finds its way into the ducts, it could pose a danger to the crew. The characters must locate and destroy the intruder.

Unfortunately, only energy weapons can hurt a spidermist—but such weapons might also damage the ship's hull—so the ship's engineer has managed to rig a couple of weapons that should suffice. See the Flamethrower statistics on the following page.

The cargo hold is laid out more or less in a rectangle—exactly like cargo holds 3 and 4 in the ship diagram on page 207 of the *Player's Handbook*. The cargo containers are arranged around the bulkheads and in somewhat orderly stacks in the center of each



Progressive layers of irregular shapes makes convincing camouflage.



Line of sight is crucial for ALTERNITY heroes searching the cargo hold.

Flamethrower Statistics

Weapon	Skill	Acc	Md	Range	Type	Hide	Damage	Actions	Clip Size
Flamethrower	Modern-SMG	+1	F	2/6/12	En/O	—	d4w/d6w/d4m	2	4

hold. Despite the airlock, the captain refuses to open it up and let the spider-mist be sucked into space; he has a crewman who went into the cargo hold and hasn't come out. Also, he risks losing cargo if the containers aren't as secure as they should be.

The heroes must locate the spider-mist and drive or lure it toward one of the characters who has a flamethrower, who then blasts it. Locating the intruder requires a complex Awareness-perception check, requiring 7 successes. The players will probably choose to perform this as an assisted action, as per the rules on page 50 of the *Player's Handbook*. Only heroes actually entering the cargo hold can assist, however.

Once the spidermist has been found, it can be lured or driven in the right direction (assuming it wasn't found by one of the heroes with a flamethrower anyway), again with a complex skill check—though this one only requires 3 successes. The appropriate skill is Tactics-infantry, which is also an assisted action. If this action succeeds, the spidermist comes within 6 meters of a hero with a flamethrower, who can then take a shot. If the shot misses or doesn't manage to kill the spidermist, the creature flees, and the process cannot be tried again for another hour. The swarm is simply too widely scattered through the cargo hold.



Once located, the spidermist is a formidable opponent.

The spidermist attacks by firing its bioelectric shock. For each action it has between the time it is located and fired upon with the flamethrower, it uses its attack on the nearest hero. If it manages to incapacitate the hero, it attacks that hero as a swarm. The spidermist stops if someone uses a flamethrower on it—though, of course, doing so causes damage to the attacked hero, as well.

The scenario ends when the heroes

manage to destroy the spidermist. The ship's captain will, of course, be very grateful.



Abandoned by his natural parents, J.D. was raised by AD&D® monsters. Jim thinks the roper, otyugh, and gibbering mouther were wrongfully excluded from this column and plans a protest.

Convention Calendar



July UK Games Fest

July 3

The Sportcentre, Harlow, Essex, UK.
Contact: Jan Eldridge, The Dashes, Harlow, Essex CM20 3RZ.
Email: uk_games.fest@virgin.net

Manafest '99

July 9-11

South San Francisco Conference Center, South San Francisco, CA.
Contact: Manafest, P.O. Box 170436, San Francisco, CA 94080.
Website: www.manafest.com
Email: info@manafest.com

X-Kahn

July 9-11

Ramada Inn, Colorado Springs, CO.
Contact: X-Kahn, 4004 Ridge Drive, Pueblo, CO 81008.
Email: rogers@usa.net

LandQuest

July 16-17

The Fat Kat Lounge, 1193 Edgewood Avenue, Jacksonville, FL.

Contact: Sanctuary Games and Books, 1200 Edgewood Avenue, Jacksonville, FL 32205.

Email: jjacobs7@bellsouth.net

Denri Con

July 16-18

The Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Aberdeen, MD.
Contact: Harford Avenue Society, 110 N. Tollgate Road, Bel Air, MD 21014.

August DragonCon

August 7-September 7

Online Convention.
Website: www.bdominia.com
Email: talaysen@mailplanet.net

Bubonicon '99

August 20-22

Howard Johnson East, Albuquerque, NM.
Contact: NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176.
Website: members.aol.com/bubonicon
Email: cwcraig@nmia.com

September Capital Con '99

September 18-19

Prairie Capitol Convention Center, Springfield, IL.
Contact: Capitol Con, 942 South First Street, Springfield, IL 62704.

CogCon

September 26-28

University Center-East, Rolla, MO.
Contact: CogCon, P.O. Box 1939, Rolla, MO 65402.

Website: www.rollanet.org/~cogcon
Email: cogcon@rollanet.org

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," DRAGON Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: DRAGON Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

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- ✳ Canadian convention
- European convention
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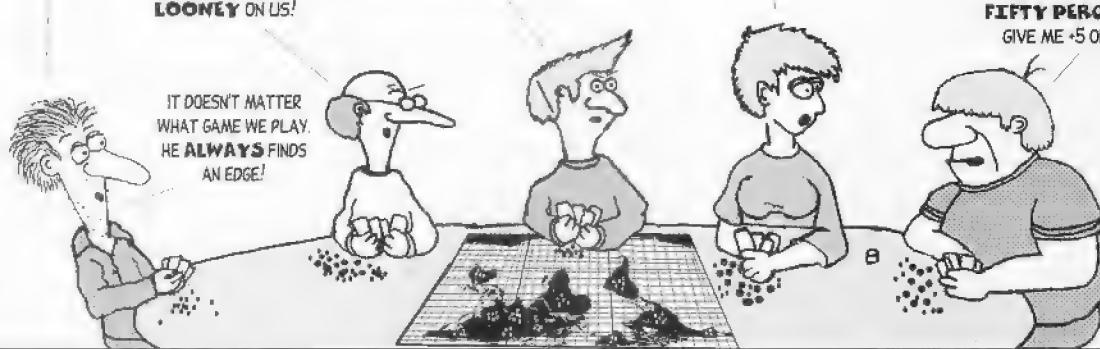
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ARES™



THE TWILIGHT JUNGLE: THE WORLD OF THE SESHEYANS

BY STEPHEN KENSON

ILLUSTRATED BY MARK NELSON

FROM the stone age to the space age, they are savage hunters from a night-bound world, enslaved by a powerful stellar nation and thrust into the light of the 26th century. Fighting to sustain an ancient culture amid the scientific wonders of galactic civilization, the sesheyans are held by many as an example of humans' unfair treatment of alien species.

Primitive aborigines living on the largest moon of Gamma Leonis III, sesheyans were discovered by VoidCorp explorers. The corporation took advantage of the sesheyans' primitive nature and arranged a contract placing them in the service of VoidCorp in perpetuity. In effect, a stellar nation turned an entire alien race into its slaves.

The sesheyans have learned a great deal about the galaxy since signing that fateful compact more than two hundred years ago, and many have begun to work in secret to free their people.

PIDGIN SESHEYAN

As a general rule, singular sesheyans words ending in “-a” or “-ai” are made plural by changing the ending to “-ei,” such as “aikai” to “aikai” or “jaeja” to “jaeja.” Most sesheyans words involving advanced technology are loan-words learned from VoidCorp. For example, the sesheyan word for “drivespace” is “dryspas,” the same word pronounced with a strong sesheyan accent.

aikatoska? “Does the ghost grasp you?” or roughly, “Do you get it?” or “Do you understand?”

aikai “ghost,” a figure from sesheyan fable

aikaya “ghost walkers,” the dead, and sesheyans in the employ of VoidCorp

The Day of Ghosts (July 13, 2274)

apassa armor

dryspas drivespace

enoshai “twilight dream,” sesheyan history and myth

enoshai “ghosts of the twilight dream,” stars, and moons (as seen from Sheya)

esosha “free heart,” native sesheyan

huraikai “Wind Spirits,” sesheyans who have escaped VoidCorp

hureja “wind claw,” a native sesheyan weapon

ieshean food

jaeja dagger

keita day (one revolution of Sheya)

laesa laser (also aikenoja, “ghost light spear” to primitive sesheyans)

losaika “keeper of ghosts,” shaman

oja spear

sesha hunter

sesheyan “hunters of the land,” the sesheyan race

sheya “hunting land,” the sesheyan homeworld

unja wing

wonto “tokens of trade,” money

PHYSIOLOGY

Sesheyans are perhaps the most “alien” species encountered thus far by humans. They average 1.7 meters tall with sleek, whipcord muscles. The sesheyan skeleton is composed of light, strong cartilage, so sesheyans weigh only an average of 40 kilograms and have extraordinarily flexible joints and posture, allowing them to crouch and bend for extended periods of time without discomfort.

Sesheyans are hexipodal, having six limbs. The upper arms end in four fingers (including an opposable thumb), and the lower legs end in three splayed toes. Both of these sets of limbs have short claws, allowing sesheyans to climb trees and perch on branches in their native jungle. The two middle limbs are slim and end in six long, slender “fingers” with flaps of leathery skin stretched between them, forming a pair of wings with a span of six meters. The wings allow sesheyans to fly on their homeworld and other worlds with Earth-normal or lighter gravity and sufficient atmospheric pressure.

The sesheyan head is wide and round, with four small eyes on each side and topped with a pair of elongated ears. Their eyes are highly sensitive to light, having adapted to the twilight environment of the jungles of Sheya. The blunt snout covers a wide mouth filled with sharp, bony ridges rather than teeth. Sesheyans have a voice box capable of producing a wide range of sounds, and they have no trouble learning and speaking human or other alien languages.

Sesheyans have long, finned tails used for balance and flight control. The tail ends in a series of spines connected by leathery skin. The spines can flex to widen or narrow the “fan” at the end of the tail, providing steering while in flight. Sesheyans also open or close their tail fans to display emotions: those in an excited mood open their tail fans, while those in a quiet, contemplative mood close their tail fans.

FROM THE STONE AGE TO THE GRAVITY AGE

According to sesheyan fable, their race originated in what is known as enoshai, or the “Twilight Dream,” a timeless state of being connected with the vastness of space and the night sky. The first

sesheyans were created by Vec’t’lir, the Brood Mother, whom the sesheyans associate with the second-largest moon of Gamma Leonis III. Her twin sons are Tal, the Hunter, and Neshii’en, the Trickster, associated with the gas giant’s two smaller moons, which chase each other endlessly across the sky.

Sesheyans were created to be the greatest hunters of Sheya, “the hunting land.” (The name sesheyan means “hunters of the land.”) In the days of the Twilight Dream, great heroes like Tal and Neshii’en lived among the sesheyans, teaching them. Over time, they became a part of the history and culture of the sesheyans, their names invoked by hunters and shamans.

For millennia, life on Sheya was largely the same. The tribes hunted (and warred occasionally), shamans kept the wisdom of the past, families mated and grew, and the cycle of life went on. The sesheyans existed in the timeless realm of the Twilight Dream—until the arrival of VoidCorp.

AIKEITA:

THE DAY OF GHOSTS

On July 13, 2274, a VoidCorp exploratory vessel landed on the largest moon of Gamma Leonis III. There, project leader JT795 42IWQ (Erim Ollander) made contact with the sesheyans. To the primitive sesheyans, the arrival of the explorer ship was nothing less than the appearance of ghosts from the night sky, as in their ancient fables. The visitors displayed magical powers: Their weapons spat fire, blinding light spilled from their instruments, and their bodies were tall and strange. Sesheyan shamans called the arrival of these strangers aikeita, “the Day of Ghosts.”

The VoidCorp crew had little difficulty making peaceful contact with the sesheyans, who considered them visitors from the Twilight Realm. Understanding the value of their discovery, JT795 42IWQ decided to remain on Sheya and conceal her discovery, even to the point of not sending transmissions to VoidCorp management, lest they be overheard by agents of another stellar nation.

Immediately after translating their language enough to converse with the sesheyans, JT795 42IWQ negotiated the

Sesheyans Compact with the leaders of the most powerful tribes. The Compact granted the sesheyans right of passage off their homeworld and access to advanced technology. In exchange, the sesheyans agreed to serve VoidCorp in perpetuity. In essence, every sesheyans became a VoidCorp employee, subject to VoidCorp rules and authority. VoidCorp now owned the sesheyans.

At first, the sesheyans were delighted by the Compact, since it seemed to them a religious experience of unprecedented proportions—a chance to share in the power and wisdom of the ghosts and to serve them faithfully. As time passed, the sesheyans began to discover that their visitors were not all they appeared to be.

When news of the Sesheyans Compact arrived, VoidCorp management was supremely pleased. They immediately ordered the exploitation of this valuable new resource. VoidCorp ships arrived on Sheya and established bases to handle administration of the population for the maximum utility of the company. Sesheyans were displaced from their long-held territories without consideration. The company assumed supreme authority on Sheya, and any disagreements on the part of the sesheyans were handled swiftly and forcefully.

Thousands of stone-age sesheyans were thrust into training programs designed to test their capabilities and make them useful employees. VoidCorp discovered that the sesheyans were remarkably intelligent and adaptable. They were able, even eager, to learn new languages and technologies, which the sesheyans considered magical. VoidCorp decided that the sesheyans would serve the company in several ways, especially in handling menial or difficult tasks. In a matter of years, sesheyans were being shipped off their homeworld by the thousands to serve their new employer.

To those who remained on Sheya, the sesheyans taken by VoidCorp became aikaya, "Ghost Walkers." From their point of view, Ghost Walkers left the living world behind and entered the Twilight Realm. For all intents and purposes, they had died and moved on to a new life elsewhere. Sesheyans held funeral rites for family-members chosen to leave Sheya and travel with the ghosts; their lives as hunters of the land were over.



A sesheyans losaika meets a VoidCorp human resources director.

THE TWILIGHT REALM

When other Stellar Nations discovered the Sesheyans Compact, there was an outcry against VoidCorp. Many denounced VoidCorp's exploitation of the species. For their part, VoidCorp officials pointed at the primitive conditions on Sheya and all the humanitarian aid, education, and technology that VoidCorp devoted to assisting the sesheyans in becoming galactic citizens. They also pointed out that the sesheyans were considered full VoidCorp employees, with the same rights and responsibilities as employees of any species. VoidCorp defended their actions and ignored protests from other Stellar Nations who called for them to renegotiate or suspend the Compact.

As the years passed, sesheyans in the employ of VoidCorp learned to function in a technological society. Their children were born as employees of VoidCorp, often away from Sheya itself. Sesheyans breeding was originally limited by the delicate balance of their ecosystem and the relatively harsh living conditions on Sheya. Now, the sesheyans were limited only by the requirements of VoidCorp corporate breeding programs, which encouraged employees to produce even

more employees. The sesheyans population exploded across numerous VoidCorp worlds as the sesheyans lifespan was greatly extended through modern medical technology.

Billions of sesheyans have grown up never having touched the soil of their homeworld, hearing only legends of the hunting land where their people originated. Some of the new generations of sesheyans threw themselves into the corporate culture, serving to the best of their ability and seeking advancement where they could find it. Others, educated and raised by VoidCorp, began to see flaws in the Sesheyans Compact.

THE GALACTIC CONCORD

In the more than two hundred years since the signing of the Sesheyans Compact, some sesheyans have turned against VoidCorp. The chaos of the first and second Galactic Wars allowed a few million sesheyans to escape from VoidCorp space to other stellar nations or unknown frontiers like the Verge. VoidCorp maintains that all sesheyans remain their employees, and it works to hunt down any "absentees" (as they are

SHEYAN FAUNA

The jungles of Sheya are filled with a wide variety of animal and plant life. Two of the better-known Sheyan predators are described here.

ISSHA

Issha are tree-dwelling reptiles similar to Terran snakes. An isssha has a blunt, triangular head with three eyes along each side and deep pits behind the eyes which serve as scent organs. The body is up to 4 meters long and muscular, covered with fine scales and patterned to match the jungle foliage. The isssha has a hinged jaw, allowing it to swallow its prey whole. The jaw is equipped with fangs that inject a deadly venom. Issha coil around tree limbs where they wait to drop on unsuspecting prey. The sesheyans use isssha hide to make fine, soft leather.

STR 11 (d4+8)	INT 1 (Animal 4 or d4+2)
DEX 11 (d4+8)	WIL 7 (d6+3)
CON 7 (d4+4)	PER 2 (Animal 6 or d4+4)
Durability 7/7/4/4	Action Check; 17+/16/8/4
Move: run 24, walk 6	#Actions: 1
Reaction Score: Good/1	

Attacks

Bite	12/6/3	1w/d4w/d4+2w	LI/O
Crush	10/5/2	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/O

On a successful bite attack where at least 1 wound penetrates the victim's armor, the isssha injects its venom. The onset time is d4+1 rounds. At the end of this time, the victim must make a Constitution feat check to resist the toxin.

Result	Damage
Critical Failure	Death
Marginal	1d6m
Ordinary	2d6w
Good	d6w
Amazing	d4w

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d4+2 (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Unarmed [11]-brawl [12]; Stealth [11]-hide [15], sneak [15]; Awareness [7]-intuition [9], perception [13]



SKA

Ska are large jungle carnivores similar to great cats. They are hexipodal, having six legs. The rear two pair of legs are adapted for running and climbing, while the front pair are for climbing and fighting, allowing the ska to rear up on its back four legs and slash with its front claws. If it manages to strike with its foreclaws, the ska can also rake with its middle claws. It also has a jaw full of sharp, bony ridges capable of inflicting a terrible bite.

The ska's hide is stripped or dappled, providing camouflage in the jungle. It has poor vision, but its senses of hearing and smell are incredibly sharp, allowing it to stalk prey in near-total darkness using scent and vibration alone. Ska tend to be solitary hunters, occasionally appearing in mated pairs. They rest atop tree branches, sleeping during the day-time and hunting at night.

Sesheyans consider the ska the fiercest and most dangerous prey in their native jungles. Sesheyan hunters often make use of ska hide, teeth, and claws as decorations, and weapons carved from ska bone are considered the most potent.

STR 13 (2d4+8)	INT 3 (Animal 10 or d6+7)
DEX 11 (2d4+6)	WIL 11 (d6+8)
CON 11 (2d4+6)	PER 3 (Animal 11 or d8+7)
Durability 11/11/6/6	Action Check; 15+/14/7/3
Move run 50, walk 10	#Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2	

Attacks

Bite	14/7/3	d6+1w/d8+1w/d4m	LI/O
Foreclaws (x2)	16/8/4	d4+1w/d6+1w/d6+2w	LI/O
Middle claws (x2)	16/8/4	d4w/d6w/d6+1w	LI/O

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d4-1 (LI), d4-2 (HI), d4-3 (En)

Skills

Athletics [13]-climb [15]; Stealth [11]-hide [12], shadow [16], sneak [14]; Stamina [11]-endurance [15]; Awareness [11]-intuition [14], perception [12]; Investigate [8]-track [13]; Resolve [11]



known). The discovery of the sesheyans colony on Grith in the Corrivale system of the Verge has led VoidCorp to lay a claim on the colonists before the Galactic Concord. The Grith colonists maintain they have been on Grith since long before the Sesheyans Compact, transported there by a precursor race that once inhabited the planet. Thus far, the Concord has upheld the sesheyans claim.

There have been occasional uprisings and rebellions of sesheyans employees on VoidCorp worlds. Rogue sesheyans who attempt to return to their homeworld are detained by VoidCorp authorities. Even if they manage to slip unnoticed into the sesheyans population, their former friends and families consider them dead or—if born off-world—complete nonentities. The majority of native sesheyans refuse to have any dealings with these Ghost Walkers and do not listen to what they have to say. Still, there is some discontent on Sheya about the Compact, and some native sesheyans have realized that VoidCorp does not have their best interests at heart.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for the sesheyans since the Day of Ghosts came when VoidCorp agreed to recruit half a billion sesheyans employees to join the Galactic Concord. Although they remain employees, these sesheyans have greater opportunities for interaction with people from other Stellar Nations and societies. Many sesheyans hope to plead their case to the Concord and gain assistance in overturning the Compact, but the Concord is far too new and still testing its authority in civilized space. It will be some time before the Concord can challenge VoidCorp's claim.

CULTURE & SOCIETY

Before VoidCorp's arrival, sesheyans maintained a simple, tribal culture based around the extended family unit. Even two hundred years after the Sesheyans Compact and their introduction into galactic civilization, some sesheyans maintain their old customs.

FAMILIES & TRIBES

Sesheyans families tend to be quite large, mainly due to the sesheyans definition of "family." They do not limit family ties to biological connections; sesheyans families include extended clans with many

WHAT THE SESHEYANS THINK

Since their first fateful encounter with humans, sesheyans have been exposed to many different races. Although individual views vary, here is what the two main sesheyans factions generally think of the other major races of the STAR*DRIVE® setting:

Fraal: "The fraal understand the value of technology. They assisted humans in reaching the stars much in the same way humans later assisted us."—*Ghost Walker*

"There is a quiet wisdom to these people, much like the most enlightened of us. Although they are not hunters or warriors, they have a great inner strength."—*Wind Spirit*

Humans: "Humans were our patrons and guides to the stars. They are a clever and inventive people. We still have much to learn from them."—*Ghost Walker*

"Humans are as changeable as the wind, and as dangerous as ska. They have equally great capacities for kindness and cruelty."—*Wind Spirit*

Mechalus: "A capable and industrious race, with an understanding of technology that makes them valuable business partners."—*Ghost Walker*

"The Mechalus are fine examples of a race that has put aside their need for violence, but they have merged too much with their machines and lost the fire of their spirit."—*Wind Spirit*

T'sa: "The t'sa foolishly reject all outsiders. If their inventive and industrious nature could only be harnessed, they could become truly productive members of galactic society."—*Ghost Walker*

"The t'sa saw the dangers in accepting human aid and kept their independence. The question is, are they willing to aid others in regaining what they have?"—*Wind Spirit*

Weren: "Brutal fighters, useful as mercenaries, but they refuse to learn the lessons offered by superior cultures."—*Ghost Walker*

"They have no idea how fortunate they are to have the Orlamu rather than VoidCorp as patrons. May their blood philosophy help them walk the dangerous path between independence and slavery."—*Wind Spirit*

relationships. Sesheyans do not mate for life but instead have many mates and many children over a lifetime. A group of sesheyans involved in mating—along with their children, close friends, and other relations—make up the whole of a family. The sesheyans language includes many terms for relations that do not translate into human languages.

A tribe is composed of a group of families. The structure of the sesheyans tribe is fluid, shifting according to the needs of its members. Tribes split when they've grown large enough, breaking into two or more tribes that go their separate ways. Likewise, sesheyans tribes encountering each other might exchange families as a sign of friendship, strengthening the ties between them before moving on. In this way, stories and history are spread among widely dispersed tribes. This practice also serves to maintain a healthy gene pool.

Tribal and family loyalties are suppressed by VoidCorp, which emphasizes loyalty to the company above all

else. Some tribes on Sheya are allowed to maintain their traditional structure, but they can be broken up by VoidCorp officials at any time to serve the company's needs. Ghost Walker sesheyans do not maintain tribal ties.

AIKEI

Sesheyans have as broad a range of emotions and expression as humans, if not more, but they do not change moods as quickly or as arbitrarily as humans do.

To the sesheyans, every state of being is embodied in a mythic archetype from their fables, known as an *aikai*, meaning ghost or spirit. When a sesheyans needs or wants to experience a particular state of being, he or she calls up the appropriate *aikai*. A sesheyans on the hunt calls upon the ghost of the Hunter and, for him, nothing other than the pursuit and capture of the prey is important. On other occasions, a sesheyans might call upon the ghost of the Dreamer, the Dancer, the Traveler, or the Maker. Each basic archetype also has dozens, if not

USING AIKEI

The best means of simulating the sesheyans use of aikei is through the Faith perk (*Player's Handbook*, page 104). The perk allows a sesheyan hero a greater chance of success when invoking the appropriate ghost in a situation. Not all sesheyans have this perk, only those with considerable faith and skill with the old ways (particularly shamans). The use of the perk is limited to actions suitable to primitive sesheyans, not for actions involving modern technology or ideas. A sesheyan might use aikei to improve a use of Melee Weapons-blade, but not Melee Weapons-powered or Computer Science.

Example: *Edolan, a sesheyan hunter, is trying to sneak past a Hatire guard on Grith. She calls upon the ghost of the Silent Stalker, focusing entirely on making her movements as quiet as a jungle stalker. Edolan has the Faith perk and rolls a Good success on her perk check. This gives her an improvement of two degrees of success on her sneak check result.*

hundreds, of variations associated with particular situations. So there is a Patient Hunter, a Feral Hunter, a Hunter Who Speaks With Spirits, and so forth.

Each of the hundreds of aikei is strongly rooted in sesheyan myth. Some are spirits or animal totems, while others are based on great heroes from legend. Instead of saying, "I am sad," a sesheyan says, "the ghost of sadness is upon me" to express sorrow. The elaborate rituals and myths associated with various aikei makes it seem—from the human point of view—as if a sesheyan has many different personalities. A sesheyan embodying the Brood Mother can be tender and nurturing. The same sesheyan can then call up the Feral Hunter and kill prey with savage abandon.

VoidCorp officially bans the practice of aikei, but it is so strongly rooted in the sesheyan psyche that it is nearly impossible to eradicate. Modern sesheyans continue to use aikei to express themselves, but the mythic elements have faded almost completely.

CLOTHING & DECORATION

Sheya is a temperate world with little climatic variation. Sesheyans have little use for clothing, often wearing only simple loincloths. Belts and harnesses allow them to carry things. Even in galactic society, Sesheyans wear little, unless environmental conditions dictate otherwise.

Sesheyans like to decorate themselves and often wear different kinds of jewelry. Native sesheyans tend to wear jewelry made from natural materials, particularly carved animal bones and teeth, as well as carved and stained wood. Since the arrival of VoidCorp,

sesheyans also wear metallic jewelry, including rings in their ears and pierced through the skin of their wings or tails.

Sesheyans also use paints to decorate their bodies. Particular patterns of decoration are often associated with particular aikei, so sesheyans wanting to invoke the ghost of the Hunter paint their bodies accordingly. Sesheyans use tattooing to decorate themselves in a more permanent fashion, usually something related to a great accomplishment or a patron spirit. Sesheyan shamans are often tattooed in this manner. Patterns tattooed on the skin of their wings are the most common.

Sesheyans living in galactic society tend to eschew many of the personal decorations worn on Sheya. This is mostly out of deference to VoidCorp policy, which prefers employees maintain an appropriately "businesslike" appearance. Sesheyans employed by VoidCorp as scouts and spies are given greater leeway and often wear more decorations.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

Sesheyan culture has been irrevocably changed by contact with galactic civilization. Although the old ways are still practiced by tribes on Sheya, sesheyans living away from their homeworld must adopt human mannerisms and abandon or hide their traditional customs and rituals to fit in. Many sesheyans fear that continual suppression of their culture by VoidCorp will cause them to lose their unique cultural identity entirely.

Since the Compact, sesheyan society has split into three fairly distinct segments: the *esosha* (Free Hearts), the *aikaya* (Ghost Walkers), and the *huraikai* (Wind Spirits). Free Hearts are those sesheyans

still living on Sheya. The Ghost Walkers are sesheyans in the employ of VoidCorp. Sesheyans who escape from VoidCorp become Wind Spirits. Wind Spirits are considered outlaws throughout the galactic arm, and even other stellar nations cannot always shelter a Wind Spirit from the vengeance of VoidCorp.

The split between these three factions of sesheyan culture is even deeper than most people realize. After two hundred years as galactic citizens, the sesheyans cannot return home. The differences between the Free Hearts and the others of their race are substantial. Free Hearts cling to the ancient culture and traditions of Sheya, permitted to do so by VoidCorp. They have little comprehension of the vastness of galactic space or the true nature of VoidCorp. Many Free Hearts remain as primitive as their pre-compact ancestors. To sesheyans born away from their home world, Free Heart life seems either idyllic or hopelessly primitive. Having learned so much, the galactic sesheyans cannot return to a blissful state of ignorance.

Despite the claims of the Wind Spirits, many Ghost Walkers are content with their lot as employees of VoidCorp. Raised since birth to honor and appreciate the company, these sesheyans are completely loyal to VoidCorp. They look with pity on the primitive Free Hearts, who are unaware of the wonders of life among the stars, and with disgust on the Wind Spirits, who betrayed their benefactors. A few Ghost Walkers harbor misgivings about VoidCorp and the Compact, but most are as loyal as VoidCorp's human employees.

The Wind Spirits have benefited from modern education and technology. They claim to understand the nature of interstellar politics in a way their ancestors could not have imagined when they agreed to the Sesheyan Compact. Wind Spirits range from pirates and renegades to political activists who claim VoidCorp illegally and immorally enslaved their race. Either way, VoidCorp considers them criminals to be hunted down.

GOVERNMENT

Before the arrival of VoidCorp, sesheyan tribes were governed by a council of the eldest members, usually including their greatest hunters and the tribe's shaman.

Matters were decided by simple vote, usually involving various rituals to call upon helpful ghosts and a divination by the shaman to read any omens.

The Sesheyen Compact officially dissolved all political and social organizations on Sheya and replaced them with VoidCorp institutions. Teaching and practicing sesheyen traditions is banned by VoidCorp, except in certain areas of Sheya where company scientists study the sesheyans' native culture.

Since the Compact, all sesheyans are considered citizens (employees) of VoidCorp from the moment of birth, just like all other sentients in VoidCorp space. The sesheyans are governed by the same set of rules and regulations as any other VoidCorp employee. They are assigned Employee Identification Numbers at birth and may apply for positions with VoidCorp. VoidCorp holds the dozen or so sesheyen Vice Presidents in the company as examples of what the sesheyans can achieve, as well as showing their equal treatment.

In practice, it is often difficult for sesheyans to advance within VoidCorp. Some sesheyans manage to overcome the limitations of their culture and background to rise in the ranks, but they do so at the cost of their cultural heritage and traditions.

RELIGION

Religion and ritual have been central to sesheyen life throughout their history, but they are vanishing due to the influence of VoidCorp. The tribes on Sheya still follow the old ways and keep their traditions alive, mostly as a "living laboratory" for VoidCorp scientists to study. Elsewhere in VoidCorp space, however, the practice of any religion is banned. Possession of religious icons or artifacts is subject to heavy fines and other penalties. Still, the practice of sesheyen religion continues in secret among some, particularly the Wind Spirits.

Sesheyen religion is based around stories told by their shamans. The fables revolve around important figures from myth and history, and they provide the framework for the many different ghosts the sesheyans believe in. The practice of fable animism involves telling the various stories at the correct times, often in conjunction with certain rituals to honor



Natural hunters, sesheyans make the deadliest VoidCorp assassins.

NEW CAREERS

VOIDCORP ASSASSIN

One of the many areas in which VoidCorp employs sesheyans is in a contemporary model of their role as hunters. Skilled and patient hunters able to fly silently and stalk prey in the dead of night, sesheyans make superlative assassins. Once given an assignment, the archtypical sesheyen assassin never gives up until either successful or dead. The activities of such assassins outside of VoidCorp space has not helped to endear the sesheyans to other stellar nations, which suits VoidCorp (and many sesheyans) just fine.

Signature Equipment: laser rifle, CF softsuit

Free Agent Core Skills (25 points): Ranged Weapons, Mod-rifle, Security-security devices, Stealth-hide

In the Verge: VoidCorp assassins go wherever they are ordered by the company. VoidCorp's strong interest in many systems of the Verge (particularly Corrivale) is enough to warrant the attention of a trained assassin when a precise strike is needed.

SESHEYAN SHAMAN

Sesheyen shamans are the spiritual leaders of their people, keepers of sacred lore and history. While most shamans do not leave Sheya, some have found their way to the stars as employees of VoidCorp, especially shamans who possess skills useful to the company, or those potential rebels VoidCorp prefers to have off Sheya. Sesheyans continue to pass on the traditions and teachings of shamanism, even though such things are banned by VoidCorp.

Signature Equipment: dagger, bone necklace, fetishes, and sacred items

Diplomat Core Skills (20 points): Knowledge-first aid 2; Deception-bluff; Entertainment; Leadership-inspire

Mindwalker Core Skills (25 points): ESP-precognition; Knowledge-first aid; Entertainment; Telepathy; Leadership-inspire

In the Verge: Sesheyen shamans can often be found in the jungles of Grith, helping guide the tribes while working to maintain the traditions and rituals of their people.

the ghosts of the tale, particularly re-enactments of legendary events and rituals intended to maintain things like the movement of the celestial bodies and the continued prosperity of the hunt.

"And so Neshii'en found himself trapped in the heart of the Ska Mother's lair when she returned. Thinking quickly, Neshii'en covered himself with the scent of the cubs, knowing the Ska Mother's sight was weak. He rolled on the ground and imitated the mewling noises of the other cubs as the great Ska Mother came closer. She nuzzled the cubs with her head, and Neshii'en lay still, calling on the ghost of the Great Ska to be with him, making him like a ska cub. The Ska Mother did not notice him among her children and so dropped the prey she captured for them and lay down to sleep. While the Ska Mother slept, Neshii'en spirited away one of the cubs to become his friend and companion. He named the cub Nura the Brave, and she became Neshii'en's good friend."

— from "The Tale of Neshii'en the Trickster and the Great Ska Mother," a traditional sesheyen fable

"Neshii'en found himself in great trouble when the Manager returned to her office unexpectedly. Thinking quickly, Neshii'en wrapped a cord from his pouch around his neck, folded his wings, and bowed his head, his eyes cast down as the Manager entered. Neshii'en called for the ghost of the Humble Servant to be upon him as the Manager asked him what he was doing in her office.

"A thousand pardons, SZ472 556XX,' he said. 'I come on an errand for Vice-President KG228 712ZA. He requests an immediate update on the status of...your project.' The Manager regarded Neshii'en for a long moment, but she saw nothing but the Humble Servant, eager to do his employer's bidding. She told Neshii'en to return to Vice-President KG228 712ZA and tell him an update would be immediately forthcoming. Dipping his head in obedience, Neshii'en

backed out of the room, his folded wings concealing the information chips taken from the Manager's safe. The manager's anger was great when she discovered what Neshii'en had done, but the Trickster had already vanished like a shadow among the trees."

— from "The Tale of Neshii'en and the Foolish Manager," a modern sesheyen fable

SHAMANISM

The central figure in sesheyen religion is the shaman, known as the *losaika*, or "keeper of ghosts." VoidCorp xenologists have noted remarkable similarities between sesheyen shamanism and that practiced by primitive human cultures. In essence, a shaman is "called" to the profession by a sign from the spirits, often an omen or an illness in which the shaman has visions. Many neophyte shamans spend lengthy periods alone in the jungle seeking such visions.

The student is apprenticed to an experienced shaman, who teaches the various stories, legends, and rituals the new shaman needs to know. The process takes several standard years, at which time the new shaman is presented to the tribe in a special ritual.

Sesheyen shamans have considerable authority in their tribes, since they are believed to be in closest contact with the ghosts and their wisdom. Scientists have discovered that some sesheyen shamans possess psionic abilities, which they often use to aid their rituals and perform their duties. They speculate that the emergence of psionic abilities, especially telepathy and clairsentience, may induce the "visions" required to become a shaman. These abilities most likely account for sesheyen tales of the fantastic powers of their shamans. Psionically-gifted sesheyans are high on VoidCorp's recruitment list.

WEAPONS & TECHNOLOGY

Before the arrival of VoidCorp, sesheyen technology was limited to bone knives and simple snares woven from jungle vines. The sesheyans had not even discovered the use of fire, due to the damp conditions in the jungles and their efficient night-vision which precluded the need for artificial lighting. All advanced technology on Sheya is

SESHEYAN WEAPONS

Weapon	Skill	Acc.	Md	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)	Actions	Hide	Cost
Bone Dagger	Melee—blade	0	F	Personal	LI/O	d4s/d4w/d4+1w	4	+3	10
Metal Dagger	Melee—blade	0	F	Personal	LI/O	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w	4	+3	20
Spear	Melee—blade	0	F	Personal	LI/O	d4w/d4+2w/d4m	3	—	15
Blowgun	Ranged—blowgun	0	F	per STR	LI/O	1s/d4s/d4w, plus poison	1	+1	10
Dart	Athletics—throw	0	F	per STR	LI/O	d4s/d4w/d4+1w, plus poison	2	+4	5
Wind Claw	Athletics—throw	0	F	per STR	LI/O	d4w/d4+2w/d4m	4	+2	15
Bola	Athletics—throw	0	F	per STR	LI/O	1s/d4s/d4+1s, plus entangle*	1	+3	20

Special Effect—Entangle: The weapon entraps the target, restricting movement. Each level of success applies a +1 modifier to the target's actions, so an Amazing success imposes a +3 penalty. Bolas affect only actions involving use of the entangled limb(s). Getting out of the entanglement requires a Strength or Dexterity feat (including the entanglement penalty).

imported by VoidCorp to supply their own operations and is kept strictly under control, out of the hands of any possible sesheyans rebels. Sesheyans employees of VoidCorp have access to all of the company's advanced technology, the same as any other employee.

The pre-existing sesheyans technology is still effective. Many people who have scoffed at the image of sesheyans wielding bone knives and simple spears have discovered just how effective, to their own regret.

WEAPONS

The standard sesheyans tool and weapon is the *jaeja* (dagger). Sesheyans daggers are typically carved out of bone and curved, with a point and a single cutting edge, about 20–30 cm in length. Some sesheyans also make use of straight, double-edged daggers chipped out of stone. Since the arrival of VoidCorp, nearly every sesheyans hunter carries a metal dagger on a leather belt around the waist.

The short spear is another common sesheyans weapon. Originally tipped with bone or stone, modern spearheads are made of metal. Sesheyans hunters can hurl spears with deadly accuracy from the air, and spears are a preferred weapon for occasions when tribes go to war with each other. While hunting, sesheyans also use various types of darts, made of wood or bone. Small darts are fired from a blowgun made of hollowed out wood, while heavier darts are thrown.

A native sesheyans weapon is the *hureja*, or wind claw, a melee/throwing weapon that consists of a short wooden shaft ending in two blades of bone

SHEYAN	
Primary	Gamma Leonis III
Planetary Class	Class 1
Gravity	G1 (0.84g)
Radiation	R1 (9 rem/yr)
Atmosphere	A2 (N, O, CO ₂)
Pressure	P3 (1.12)
Heat	H2 (22° C)
Orbital Distance	10.2 AU
Diameter	5,840 km
Year (Earth days)	6,716 days
Day (hours)	22.4 hours
Axial Tilt	8°
Density	1.07
Satellites	None

(metal for modern versions) that curve in opposite directions. The wind claw is grasped and wielded from the middle of the shaft. It can be thrown a considerable distance by a skilled hunter.

Sesheyans hunters also use a weapon similar to an Earth bola: three or four round stones tied together by tough cords. The bola can be thrown a considerable distance by a capable hunter and can entangle the limbs or wings of small prey animals.

In addition to their various native weapons, sesheyans have proven adept with modern 26th-century weapons. Their sharp eyesight makes them capable marksmen, once they become accustomed to the feel of a modern gun. An airborne sesheyans with a laser pistol is a formidable opponent.

Sesheyans normally wear little or no armor, since it tends to interfere with their wings and weighs them down. They can wear light, modern body armor specially tailored to accommo-

date their body structure and wings, however. This armor is generally limited to softsuits and similar light, flexible materials. Cerametal armor and bodytanks modified to fit sesheyans are extremely rare, and sesheyans don't generally like wearing them. A deflection harness is perhaps the ultimate armor for a sesheyans: light, unencumbering, and capable of being built into a pair of bracelets, a belt, or an amulet.

THE SESHEYAN HOMeworld

Sheya is the fourth and largest moon of the gas giant Gamma Leonis III. Although it orbits more than ten times the distance from its star than Earth orbits its sun, GLIII puts out considerable heat, warming the surface of Sheya and making it quite habitable.

The moon is cut with a network of deep valleys. While the higher altitudes are cold and arid, the valleys are warm and lush. Native plant-life grows riotously throughout the lowlands, forming a heavy jungle canopy that soaks up the heat and limited light that falls on the surface of Sheya, cloaking the ground below in perpetual twilight. Sheya's ecosystem is filled with various lifeforms, of which the sesheyans are the top of the food chain. Sesheyans stalk wild game in the jungles, from snakelike reptiles to large, sleek jungle predators and game animals.

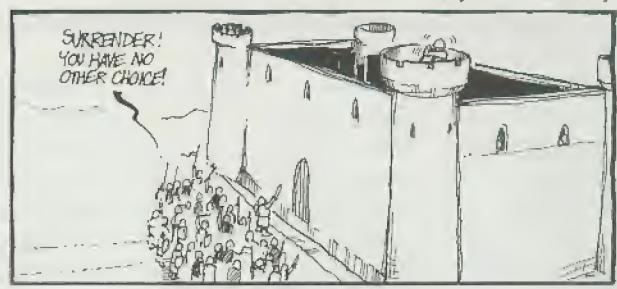


*Steve Kenson is the author of the *Avengers: Masters of Evil* adventure for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game. He is a lifelong fan of science fiction and a new fan of the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting.*

Dragon Mirth™



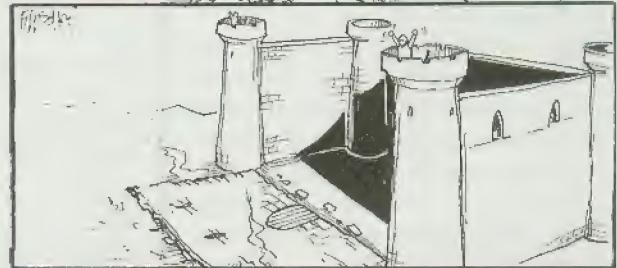
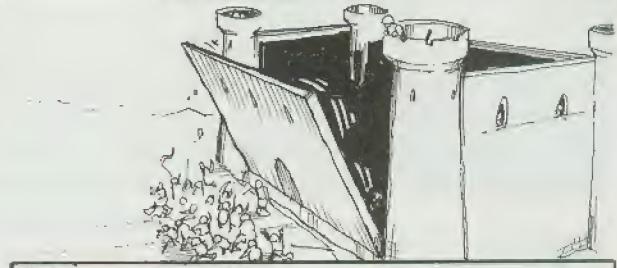
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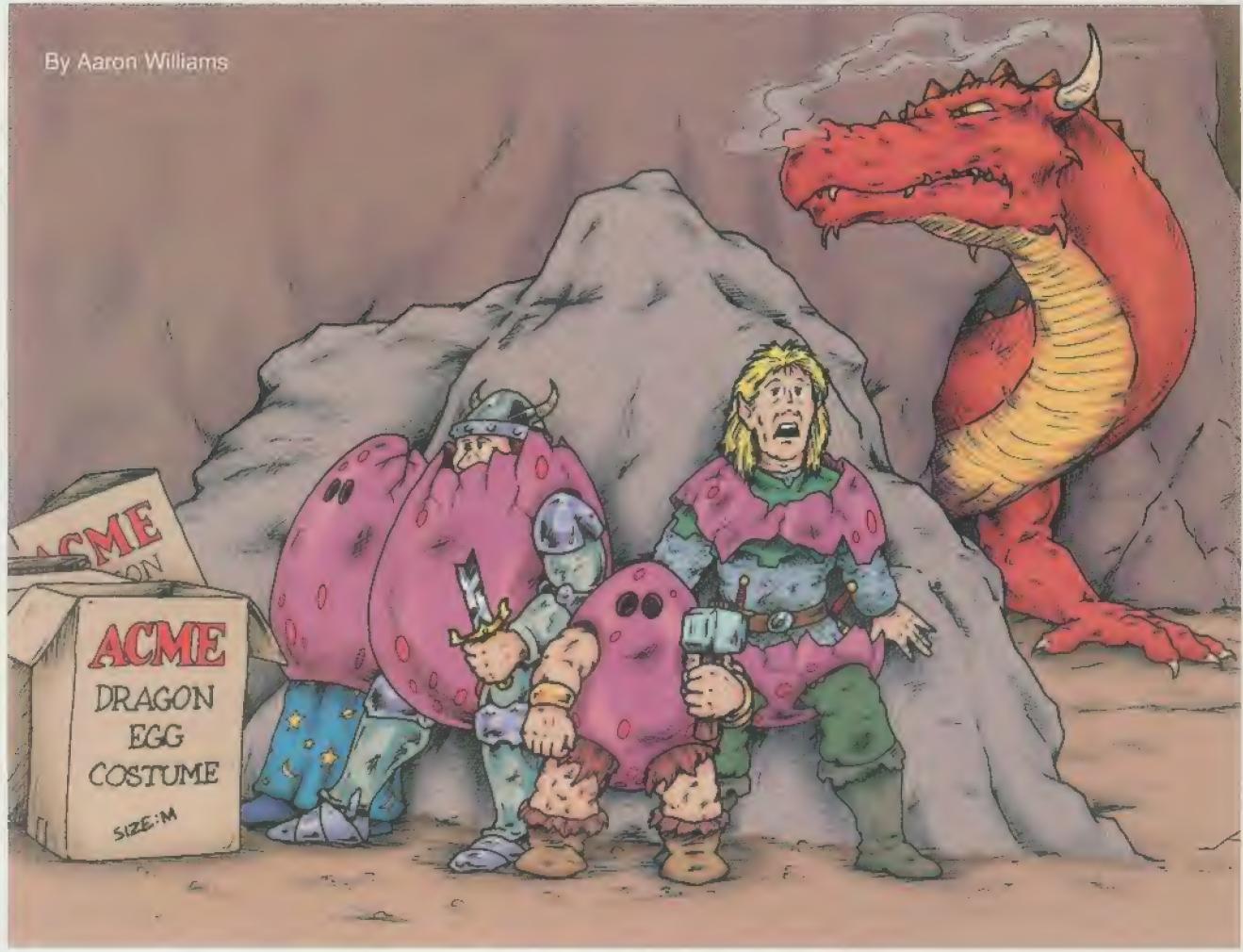
<http://members.aol.com/thinkloud/>

"Gold, Diamond,
Ruby, Emerald..."

By Dwain Meyer



By Aaron Williams



"What's important is that we *learned* something!"



"I'm afraid our new companion is more suited to the 'hash and slack' type of adventure."

The Unspeakable Off by John Kovalic



By Aaron Williams



"I keep forgetting where to stop."

By Steve Lindstrom



MIND FLAYERS

by Mike Selinker

no. 2

Twelve monsters are hiding in the following grid.

Each is six letters long. Each monster's name starts in one of the outer cells adjacent to the alignment of that monster. It then goes one square at a time in a straight line (left, right, up, or down) away from the alignment letters. Cross off the letters as you go, and after you find all twelve monsters, you'll be left with a quote from Roger Moore from way back in *DRAGON® Magazine* #45.

LG	LG	NG	NG	CG	CG
LG	I A T N	N N T U	W J N R		
LG	H D N I	T	T D		
LG	O C L L	O E R A	T N M E		
LG	S O U T	T R	L		
LN	A U E O	C W I A	N E E		
LN	W R K O	A D			
LN	L I W B	A A U T	A A T I		
LN	D X A B	L	N		
LE	G E A E	H B R A I N	R S		
LE	I O R O	O E T			
LE	T I K K	N K N A U G	D S		
LE	M T O O	O T Y			
	LE	LE	NE	NE	CE
	LE	NE	NE	CE	CE

MIND BLAST

Acertain monster in the AD&D® Game has a name of five letters. If you reverse the order of the last four letters of its name, you will get the name of a member of a very famous comedy duo. What monster is it?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 92.

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
STORY SUGGESTED BY MICHAEL VARNI

OKAY, THE NARROW WINDING PASSAGE OPENS UP INTO A **LARGE CAVERN!** THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH **MIST** THAT SEEMS TO BE GENERATED BY A **LARGE BUBBLING POOL** OF MINERAL WATER IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM. AS YOU LOOK AROUND YOU SEE A PILE OF RAGS AND STRAW NEXT TO A **HUGE ROCK**.

PILE OF RAGS? I'M GOING TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK.

I'M GOING TO DRINK FROM THE POOL. IS IT MAGICAL?

RAGS AND STRAW? SOUNDS LIKE WE'VE STUMBLED INTO SOMEBODY'S LAIR.

OK, BOB, AS YOU ARE SEARCHING THE RAGS THE **ROCK** SUDDENLY MOVES. TURNS OUT IT WAS ACTUALLY A **FESTERING REAVER** THAT HAD BEEN SLEEPING IN A FETAL POSITION. SINCE IT WAS SLEEPING AND IS MOMENTARILY DISORIENTED, YOU HAVE THE INITIATIVE.



JUMPIN' BAJEEMERS! A FESTERING REAVER? NO WAY! I CALL FOUL! THEY YANKED THAT CREATURE FROM THE **SECOND EDITION HACKLOPEDIA OF BEASTS!**

WELL, THAT'S JUST TOO BAD. THIS DUDE HAS AN **ATTITUDE**, AND HE'S IN YOUR FACE. **DEAL WITH IT!**

DEAL WITH IT? CUT THE CRAP, B.A. THIS IS BOGUS.

BRIAN, HELP ME OUT HERE. TELL THIS **IDIOT** THAT **FESTERING REAVERS** WERE YANKED BECAUSE THEY UNBALANCED THE GAME. GO AHEAD, TELL HIM!

ACTUALLY BOB, THEY WERE PULLED FROM THE **2ND EDITION** TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE **SWACK IRON DRAGON** ANATOMICAL CHARTS, BUT THE FORWARD SPECIFICALLY STATES THAT **ALL** PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED CREATURES ARE STILL **OFFICIAL!**

BRIAN'S RIGHT. I SAW **FESTERS** ON THE LIST OF **SANCTIONED CREATURES** AT **HACKTOURNY** LAST FALL.



WELL, THIS CERTAINLY **SUCKS!** I DON'T OWN A FIRST-EDITION COPY. HOW THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO KEEP UP ON MY **PLAYER TACTICALS** IF I DON'T HAVE ALL THE **MONSTER STATS?** THIS PUTS ME AT A DISADVANTAGE.

KEEP UP? UH HUH--I **THOUGHT** SO. I **KNEW** YOU GUYS WERE READING **FOR-GM-EYES-ONLY** MATERIAL AGAIN.

YOU CAN'T PROVE A THING.

YEAH, YOU CAN'T EVEN FIND A **FIRST-EDITION HACKLOPEDIA** THESE DAYS FOR LESS THAN **FIFTY BUCKS!**

RELAX GUYS. FORTUNATELY, WE HAVE THE INITIATIVE. I HAPPEN TO KNOW THESE BAD BOYS ARE HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO **FIRE DAMAGE**! I'LL JUST LOB A **FIREBALL** AT HIS ASS, AND WE'LL MOVE ON.

FIREBALL? HOLD YER FIRE, TEX. I'M IN HARM'S WAY. FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.

SORRY, BOB. IF I CAN TAKE THIS DUDE OUT **BEFORE** HE CAN ATTACK, IT WILL BE WORTH IT.



WORTH IT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "WORTH IT?" I'M WARNING YOU--DON'T BE CASTING ANY FRICKIN' FIREBALLS IN MY DIRECTION. COMPRENDE?

TEFLON BILLY IS WILLING TO RISK A LITTLE **COLLATERAL DAMAGE** TO SAVE THE PARTY. IT TAKES **STRONG CHARACTER** TO BE ABLE TO MAKE THAT KIND OF **TOUGH DECISION**.

I'M SURE HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING, BOB.



MOMENTS LATER...

OK, BOB, JUMPING INTO THE **BUBBLING POOL** DOES PUT OUT THE FLAMES, BUT SINCE THE WATER WAS **BOILING HOT**, YOU TAKE AN ADDITIONAL 85 POINTS OF **SCALDING DAMAGE**. YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF TO LET DAVE CONTINUE BEATING OUT THE FLAMES WITH THE SHOVEL.

DAMN! I CAN'T BELIEVE I ROLLED THREE CRITS IN A ROW WITH THAT SHOVEL IS THIS SOME KIND OF JOKE?

TOO BAD B.A. HELD YOU TO THOSE WEAPON PROFICIENCY MODIFIERS.



I HOPE YOU'RE READY FOR SOME PAYBACK, 'CUZ AS I SOON AS I GET RAISED, I'M COMING AFTER YOUR ASS! YOU HEAR ME? THERE'S NO PLACE YOU CAN HIDE.

EASY THERE, BOB. CALM DOWN.

SORRY, NUMB DICE, I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. MAYBE I SHOULD CAST A **SPEAK TO THE DUMB DEAD DWARF** SPELL OR SOMETHING.

BRIAN, HE'S OBVIOUSLY UPSET. PLEASE DON'T PROVOKE HIM.

UPSET? FOR WHAT? I SAVED THE PARTY!

WELL HERE'S A LITTLE **NEWS FLASH** FOR YOU. BOB AND I SWORE A **BLOOD OATH** THAT IF EITHER OF OUR CHARACTERS WERE KILLED THE OTHER WOULD AVENGE HIS DEATH! I'M DRAWING MY **HACKMASTER** +12 AND CALLING YOU OUT!

OH, SO, YOU WANNA DANCE WITH THE **BIG MAN**, HUH? IS THAT IT? OKAY, I'LL THROW DOWN WITH YOU.

B.A., I CAST AN **ANIMATE DEAD** SPELL ON BOB'S CARCASS. AT THE SAME TIME, I USE A CHARGE FROM MY **RING OF UNDEAD UTILITIES** TO CAST A **ZOMBIE SLAVE** SPELL ON BOB.

I ORDER BOB TO ENGAGE DAVE IN **MORTAL COMBAT**!

NEXT ROUND I'M PREPPING A **HASTE** SPELL TO HELP PUT SOME **PEP** IN BOB'S STEP.

AAAAA! WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING? **ZOMBIE SLAVE**? YOU ARE **SO DEAD**! YOU HEAR ME?

OH, BY THE WAY, ACCORDING TO THE RULES ON **DIRTY FIGHTING**, IF YOU FORFEIT ALL DEFENSIVE ACTIONS DURING COMBAT, YOU GET SOME HEFTY TO-HIT/TO-DAMAGE MODIFIERS. SO I WANT YOU TO CONCENTRATE ON **HURTING** DAVE, REGARDLESS OF THE COSTS.

SEVERAL MINUTES LATER...

OK, DAVE'S BLOW SEVERS BOB'S LEFT ARM. THE IMPACT CAUSES BOB TO STAGGER BACK A FEW STEPS, BUT HE IMMEDIATELY ENGAGES AGAIN.

HEY, STOP WITH THE FREAKIN' DISMEMBERMENT CALLS, WILL YA?

SHYA, RIGHT! AFTER YOUR ATTEMPTED BLOW AT MY **JUGULAR**, IT'S EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF.

B.A., WHILE THEY'RE DOING THE **TANGO**, I'LL CAST A **CLOUD OF PUMMELING FISTS** ON DAVE.

BY MY FIGURES, THAT SHOULD PUT HIM OVER THE EDGE ON HIT POINTS.

RIGHT YOU ARE, BRIAN. POOR DAVE DROPS LIKE A ROCK. CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE MANAGED TO **MURDER** TWO OF YOUR FELLOW TEAMMATES.

SOMETIMES PLAYERS ARE MORE DANGEROUS TO THEMSELVES THAN THE MONSTERS.

SORRY, GUYS, BUT SEEING HOW **BOTH** OF YOU HAVE THREATENED MY LIFE, I THINK IT'S BEST IF YOU REMAINED MY **ZOMBIE SLAVES** FOR THE TIME BEING. AS **JIMMY HOFFA** ONCE SAID, "KEEP YOUR ENEMIES IN SIGHT LEST THEY DO YOU HARM!" DAVE, YOU'LL SERVE AS MY PERSONAL **TORCH BEARER**, AND BOB WILL BE MY **SCROLL CADDY**.

HAR HAR LOSERS!! GAWD, I LOVE THIS GAME.



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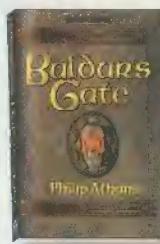
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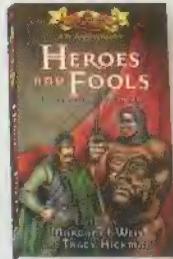
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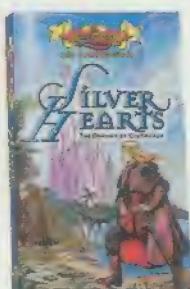
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By Matthew G. Adkins

A tainted well leads to the discovery of a poison impervious to magic. Can you find the cure before the villagers die? An AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS® adventure for levels 1–3.

The Amulet & the Underdark

By William Kenoyer

The heroes must recover a stolen peace token to keep two fiefdoms from war. Unfortunately, the pesky thing doesn't stay in one place for long. An AD&D adventure for levels 5–7.

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AUGUST

Silverfall: Stories of the Seven Sisters

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel

By Ed Greenwood

Seven beautiful sisters, all touched by the hand of the goddess Mystra, are together in one book for the first time as they match wits and magical powers with a Realms-spanning conspiracy.

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TSR 21365

ISBN 0-7869-1365-7



Brothers in Arms The Raistlin Chronicles, Volume Two

A DRAGONLANCE Novel

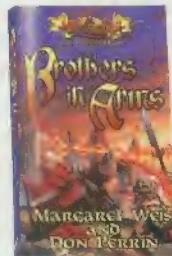
By Margaret Weis and Don Perrin

In the months after the events of *The Soulforge*, Raistlin and Caramon join a mercenary army. The army's first assignment is to capture a city that holds a secret known only to Lord Ariakas, commander of the dragonarmies.

\$6.99/\$8.95 CAN

TSR 21429

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Murder in Drivespace

A STAR*DRIVE Adventure

By Richard Dakan

Place a diplomatic meeting aboard a starship, then drop that ship into the dimensional void of drivespace. When an alien ambassador is murdered, it's a race against time to find the killer before the ship emerges from drivespace. This adventure blends mystery with science fiction for the STAR*DRIVE campaign or any ALTERNITY setting. Includes details on a new alien species that could become humanity's most trusted ally or deadliest enemy.

\$13.95/\$18.95 CAN

TSR 11407

ISBN 0-7869-1407-6



The Siege of Mt. Nevermind

The Chaos War Series

A Dragonlance Novel

By Fergus Ryan

When agents of the Dark try to enlist the gnomes in the Chaos War, they do not reckon with an assortment of well-intentioned heroes, a brilliant (well, not *that* brilliant) gnome inventor and the indomitable gnome spirit.

\$5.99/\$7.95 CAN

TSR 21381

ISBN 0-7869-1381-9



SEPTEMBER

The Wyrmskull Throne

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventure

By Steven E. Schend and

Thomas M. Reid

This exciting adventure revolves around the ancient artifact, the Wyrmskull Throne. This epic employs the underwater adventuring rules found in *The Sea of Fallen Stars*. For PC levels 4–7.

\$12.95/\$18.95 CAN

TSR 21405

ISBN 0-7869-1405-X



The Spine of the World

A Forgotten Realms Novel

By R.A. Salvatore

New York Times bestselling author R.A. Salvatore continues the tale of the fall of the once mighty barbarian Wulfgar. Featuring the popular journal entries of Drizzt Do'Urden, *The Spine of the World* is an epic tale of adventure and redemption.

SRP \$23.99/\$31.95 CAN

TSR 21418

ISBN 0-7869-1418-1



Silver Anniversary Collector's Edition

The 25th anniversary celebration of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game culminates this August with the release of the *Silver Anniversary Collector's Edition* boxed set from Wizards of the Coast. This limited edition product features highlights from the last quarter century of the D&D® game. Keith Strohm, AD&D



Brand Manager, calls the release "the ultimate celebration of the D&D game's rich history."

The boxed set represents the work of the talented graphics and production departments at Wizards of the Coast and will surely strike a spark with every D&D fan. The Collector's Edition boxed set, which premieres at the 1999 GEN CON® game fair, includes:

▲ Facsimiles of the original modules featured in TSR's Silver Anniversary releases: B2 *Keep on the Borderlands*, G1 *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief*, G2 *The Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl*, G3 *Hall of the Fire Giant King*, I6 *Ravenloft*, S2 *White Plume Mountain*, and the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rulebook.

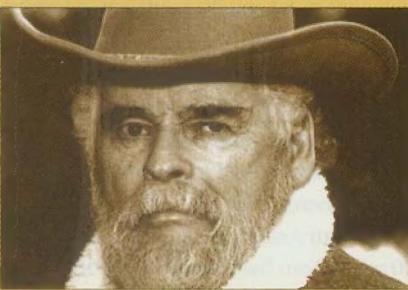
▲ An all-new 28-page history of TSR book, including a retrospective essay by D&D co-creator Gary Gygax.

▲ L3 *Deep Dwarven Delve*, a recently recovered, never-before-released 1st-Edition adventure by Len Lakofka.

▲ An all-new, specially created, frameable art print painted by Jeff Easley.

DRAGON Magazine Fiction Wins Maggie Award

On April 23 in Los Angeles at the 43rd Annual Maggie Awards sponsored by Western Publications Association, DRAGON® Magazine took top honors for Best Fiction for Neal Barrett's "The Lizard Shoppe," from issue #251. More than 1,700 entries from more than 230 companies vied for awards in all categories of the competition. The WPA Maggie Awards Presentation, honoring the best in publishing, is considered the most prestigious such event in the Western U.S.



Award winning author Neal Barrett, Jr.

The magazine staff extends its heartfelt appreciation to Neal for his great work. We hope "The Lizard Shoppe" is only the first of many Neal Barrett stories we'll have the privilege of presenting in these pages.

Contest Winners

Since the response to recent contests has been so overwhelming, we have some catching up to do. First, the long-awaited results of our "Planar Sites" contest. The winner of the contest is William James Cuffe, of Houston, TX, with his entry "Biome," a strange and bizarre plane that made us wonder what it would be like to walk through a living cell. Our runners-up were Simon Horton of Warren, NH, for his entry "The Ember Isles," and John Prager of Bay City, MI, for his entry "Vexillum." Each received the PLANESCAPE®

campaign expansion, *The Inner Planes*.

In the "Threat from the Sea" contest, our winners are Oren Satov of Scarborough, Ontario, for sending us the sirine priestess Shirah; Chris Holmes of Plymouth, MN, for his werepanther entry Ororo of Chult; Nick Overfield of La Jolla, CA, for the goblin fighter Tirga; and Brian Corvello, of Washington, CT, for presenting us with the storm giant Maelstrom. These entries will be featured in a future "Rogue's Gallery," so keep an eye on these pages. Each winner receives a signed copy of Mel Odom's fantastic novel *Rising Tide*, set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign.

Finally, we have news on the "Rogue's Gallery Guild Design" contest. After several difficult decisions, we have picked our winners: Julie Ratliff and Rebecca Sutherland Borah of Clyde, NC, who submitted "The Paws of Bast Guildhall," a thieves' guild in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. Our runners-up are Jose Gonzalez of New City, NY, for "The Windsong Academy," and Aaron Rieley of Northglenn, CO, for the "Stronghold of Zsol." Julie and Rebecca will receive \$100 worth of TSR game material, and all of our top entrants receive one-year subscriptions to DRAGON Magazine.

Congratulations to all of these winners, and thanks to everyone who sent us an entry. We're looking forward to seeing what you come up with next.

Gygax at GEN CON Game Fair

If you've never met Gary Gygax, now's your chance. Co-creator of the best-selling DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game and the voice of gaming in the early years of TSR, will run D&D games, attend seminars, sign autographs, and meet the many fans he's accumulated over the past quarter century. Among his scheduled appearances are a special autograph session for the 25th Anniversary Collector's Edition boxed set and several seminars celebrating the history of AD&D.



FRED FIELDS

Fantasy artist Fred Fields

is alive and well and doing better than ever.

by Stephen Kenson

Earlier this year, a fan inquired as to the whereabouts of artist Fred Fields. "He said he hadn't seen my work and wanted to know if I was still around," Fields says. "It was creepy, like reading my own obituary. So I just want to say that rumors of my demise have been greatly exaggerated."

Fields is more active in fantasy art than ever, as can be seen by the cover of this issue of *DRAGON® Magazine*. In fact, a book of his work, *The Art of Fred Fields*, is set for release later this year from Archangel Entertainment.

Born in northern Kentucky, Fields can't recall a time when he didn't want to be an artist. "I don't know that becoming an artist is a decision you make," he says. "I've been drawing since before I can remember, and I started painting at age nine. I used to do all these monsters and stuff, and my mom was frankly a little concerned about it. Now that I'm making a living at it, I think mom's OK with it. My parents always encouraged me to draw and do what I wanted with it. They've always been 100% behind me."

Fields attended the Central Academy of Commercial Art (now known as the Cincinnati Academy of Design), about 20 miles from his home in Kentucky. He moved to Chicago after graduation and worked for about a year in advertising, doing illustrations and concept sketches for television commercials and print ads. "I knew I had potential back then," says Fields, "but I just wasn't there yet."

While he was doing advertising work, Fred continued painting on his own time. Eventually he began sending out samples of his work. Among others, *DRAGON Magazine* wrote back to Fred and said they were interested.

Fred painted his first cover for *DRAGON Magazine* in 1988, issue #142. "The cover is of a warrior wading through this swamp, and you can see the head of a dragon rising up behind him. The warrior is actually standing on the dragon's snout." He applied to TSR's art department not long after. "I called them every day for about two months until they hired me," he says with a laugh.

Working at TSR was a learning experience. "It had a lot to do with soaking up everything I could get from everybody

else around me. I went from freelancing, completely on my own, to sitting in a room with the likes of Clyde Caldwell, Brom, Tony Szczudlo, Robh Ruppel, Dana Knutson, Randy Post, and Todd Lockwood. I just sort of stopped and thought, 'Wow, I've arrived.'"

In his time at TSR, Fred illustrated scenes from worlds as diverse as the *FORGOTTEN REALMS®* and *RAVENLOFT®* settings. "It was fun doing the Gothic horror stuff. In some cases, I think I took it further than other artists. I put a lot more blood in there."

When considering some of his most memorable work, Fred recalls "One of the first pieces I did at TSR was this fire minion coming up out of a sea of lava. Now I see it in tattoo magazines all the time. I guess people grab a lot of TSR books for ideas before going into the tattoo shops."

Fred does most of his work using photographs and models. "I learned by trying to paint things to look exactly as they look in real life. Even with monsters and dragons, I sculpt them and photograph them as models. When I sit there painting it, the monster looks as real as the person standing next to it does."

The cover for this issue is actually one of the first times Fred's girlfriend, Sandy, modeled for him. "The image is kind of a play on Boticelli's 'Birth of Venus,'" Fred says, "only this is the 'Birth of Night.' The funny thing is the woman on the cover is very pale with dark hair, but Sandy is blond and tan, so I definitely modify reality to fit my ideas."

Fred and Sandy were childhood friends, reunited after being apart for fifteen years. "We're real soulmates," Fred says. The couple is expecting their first child later this year, which has limited Sandy's modeling for Fred's work. "Sandy posed for a *STAR*DRIVE®* character when she was two months pregnant and just starting to show. Now she's taken herself out of the modeling game until the baby comes."

Now living in Kentucky, Fields is working on a *DRAGON Magazine* cover for next year, as well as several other projects. He assures fans that he's not going away any time soon. "To all of the Fred-heads out there," he says, "keep looking for my stuff, because I'll keep putting it out there."

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